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A DETECTIVE STORY

The Clue in the Box

BY ALEXANDER DOUGLAS

Read "TRAILED BY A FRENCH DETECTIVE," by Rene Renaud, in Our Next Number

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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THE CLUE IN THE BOX

A DETECTIVE STORY OF TWO CONTINENTS

By ALEXANDER DOUGLAS
(Scotland Yard Detective)

AN INTRODUCTION

WHEN comparatively a young man, I had gained some notice while on the police force in my native Scotch city of Edinburgh. And when I received an appointment as a special officer at the famous London Scotland Yard establishment, I bore some highly complimentary letters from my old chiefs.

Nevertheless, I felt that I had up-hill work when I entered my name on the books of the great London office.

I did not expect to win a reputation in my new sphere at a galloping pace, as I had sense enough to know that I would be very fortunate, indeed, if I could hold my own for some years.

But fate gave me an opening sooner than I could expect, and under very peculiar circumstances was I induced to become an agent in the unraveling of a great mystery. When I was but a few weeks in London, I chanced to meet a young cousin of mine, one George Graham, who was a wealthy landholder in Scotland.

George and I were school-mates in Edinburgh; and though I was but the son of a poor shop-keeper, he always treated me as he would his equal in wealth and station.

On the day I met him in London he treated me as kindly as ever, and made me promise to take supper with him that night at his bachelor home in the West End.

"I'll only have a few friends with me, you know, my dear Sandy," said he; "and you will like each of them, I'm certain. Nothing stuck-up about any of them, I assure you."

"Are they from our own country, George?" I inquired.

"Only one of them, and you know him, I think. I allude to Hector Maxwell. But I see by your serious face that you don't like Hector."

"I can't say very much, if anything, against the young man, George," was my quiet reply; "and you know beggars can't be choosers."

"Don't talk that way, young man," said the good-natured Graham. "Then I'll introduce you to one of the queerest specimens of an Irishman you ever encountered. He is a member of Parliament from Kanturk, or some place in Munster. When he's sober he acts like a fool, and swears at everything English. When he's half-gone he becomes quite rational, and then he is one of the most agreeable fellows in the world."

"And when he is full-drunk," I remarked, "he becomes a perfect angel, I suppose?"

"That's Miles Murphy to a dot, Sandy," cried George, with a laugh. "When my Irish friend is full of wine, he talks and acts like a being from the other world. But you will come and judge for yourself?"

"And whom else will I meet there, George?" I inquired. "You know I never cared for large gatherings long ago."

"Oh, only one more—a young American. You will make us five in all. Richard Winchester is a young gentleman from New York, whose father has made a fortune as a doctor, and he is proud of the fact. He is a splendid fellow, indeed, although we are rivals."

"Rivals, George!" I exclaimed. "Surely you have not forgotten Annie Cameron!"

"I have not," was the earnest reply. "And 'tis of her I speak now. This young American gentleman met Annie, and he paid court to her, not being aware that we were engaged. You know that Miss Cameron is here in London with her father?"

"I did not know it," was my reply. "But you have told the young American, I hope."

"She told him, Sandy. He offered Annie his hand and his fortune last week, and she informed him that she was engaged to me. The fellow came to me at once and made an apology for his presumption. Oh, I'm certain you'll like him. You will come, I'm sure; I'll not be refused."

I could not refuse my good-natured cousin, and I accepted the invitation.

And on that night occurred the strange incident which gave me a chance to work in a very mysterious case.

CHAPTER ONE

GEORGE GRAHAM'S FOREBODINGS

"WHAT'S wrong with you, George?"

"Cheer up, old fellow, and pass around the punch with a heavy hand and a light heart."

"My gracious, he acts like one who was going to his mother's funeral."

"Any bad news from home to-day, George?"

Such were the remarks passed by Richard Winchester, Miles Murphy, Hector Maxwell and I, as we were seated around the punch-table on the night in question.

It wanted just half an hour of midnight, and each and all of us had partaken freely of wine and whisky-punch after supper.

During the early part of the night our host, George Graham, was in excellent spirits, and entertained his guests in the most agreeable manner.

As the hour of midnight drew near, however, we all noticed that a shade of sadness was stealing over him, and that he was silent, pensive, and even absent-minded.

Rousing himself a little, when thus addressed, my cousin looked around with a smile, and cried:

"I'm just a born fool, friends. Let me fill up the glasses again, and I will tell you what has affected me so."

"Fill the glasses, by all means," cried Murphy, who was approaching the angelic state; "and bad 'cess to the man who goes to bed sober to-night, or any other night, for that matter."

"To the mischief with the blues, Graham," cried Dick Winchester, as he sipped his punch.

"What is it that troubles you, George?" inquired Hector Maxwell. "It will relieve you to tell your friends about it."

I remained silent at the time, but I was watching my cousin's face with intense interest, for somehow his gloomy brow had affected me in a strange fashion, and I felt that something mysterious and extraordinary would surprise us ere long.

You must know that we, of the old Celtic hill tribes, are firm believers in second-sight and other supernatural experiences.

"My dear friends," said George Graham, "you must pardon me for my apparent moroseness, and I know that some of you will laugh at me when I state the cause of it."

"If any one laughs at you to-night, Graham," said Murphy, "I'll shoot him in the morning. Pass around the punch again, and then ease your mind."

"You all know," continued Graham, "that this is my birth-night. When the hour of midnight tolls, I will be twenty-three years old."

"And may you live to ladle out punch like this until you are a hundred and twenty-three, George," cried Miles.

"The same to you, Murphy," said young Graham, with a sickly effort at a smile. "I should be merry, indeed, for I have everything that a young man could desire—health, wealth, and the prospect of possessing a good, beautiful wife before the year is out."

"And may your wife live to be a great-grandmother!" Murphy shouted.

"Then what is the matter, George?" inquired Hector Maxwell.

"It is this," replied my cousin; "when I was seven years of age, a weird old woman attached to our clan on the hills of Scotland predicted that something would happen to me—something very extraordinary and mysterious would occur, to cause me sorrow and place my life in great danger—on this very night."

"Pooh! Nonsense, man!" said Murphy. "It is you that would be after minding old women's stories, good or bad! Sure 'twas predicted for me, the night I was born, that I'd be either a clergyman, or be hung; and now see——"

"It isn't too late for the last yet, Miles," remarked Dick Winchester.

"And what matter how a man dies, my friend," replied the Irishman, "if he dies in a good cause? You may see Miles Murphy swung off as a martyr, but never as a murderer. But pass the punch, ye sleepy divils, and I'll give you a song. 'Rouse yourself, Graham, and look at the clock there. 'Tis near twelve now, and none of us half-gone."

"I declare to you, friends," muttered Graham, as he filled the glasses from the bowl, "that the prediction has never troubled me until I happened to glance at the clock, when the hand was denoting the eleventh hour."

"And the vision of the old Scotch witch appeared before

you," said Winchester. "Thank fortune, we have no Scotch witches or Irish fairies in America."

"Dop't say a word against Irish fairies, you rascal, or I'll not drink another cup of punch in your company," Miles retorted. "'Tis just going to strike the hour of midnight, boys. Fill your glasses to the brim, and stand up till we drink a long, happy life to our good friend, and confusion and death to his enemies—if he ever had one."

We were all on our feet on the instant, and just as the clock in a neighboring church commenced to toll the hour of midnight, while the little gong in the time-piece over the mantel was ticking away in the same strain.

Just as we were in the act of raising the glasses to our lips, we were all startled by hearing the door-bell ringing violently, and as if a messenger of evil tidings was at the door.

George Graham fell back in his chair before the church-bell had ceased to toll; and we all stared at each other, as if paralyzed for the moment.

Then I heard the man-servant, who had been waiting on us during the evening, descending the stairs to the door; and, as if inspired by a sudden impulse, I sprang to the window, raised the sash in a gentle manner, and peered out.

I cannot account for my action; but I am certain that, if I had not raised the window I would have never found a clue to the unraveling of a fiendish plot.

As I peered down on the steps, I perceived a boy standing near the door, holding a square box in his hand.

"Some present for George," I muttered, as the door below was opened.

"And what a queer hour to send it."

"What do you want here at this hour?" demanded the servant of the boy.

"None of yer 'pertinence," growled the youth below. "Can't a chap bring your master a present without having his nose chawed off?"

"Let's have the present, and wait till I take it up to Mr. Graham," said the servant.

"I'll wait, of course," said the boy. "I say——"

"What is it?"

"Yer ain't got no cold chicken-pie, nor a mug of ale handy, have you?"

"Not for you, Mister Insolence," replied the servant, in surly tones. "If you had kept your distance I would have asked you in; but now——"

The man slammed the door in the boy's face, and retreated into the hall.

"Oh, my," roared the boy, as he turned down the steps. "Gruffy is on his shape. I hopes he brings that pie and beer. Great Judas, but won't there be a lark in there!"

The boy stood on the sidewalk a moment, turned his face to the door, held his two hands to his face with the finger of one touching the nose, as he muttered aloud:

"Wish them luck with their present. Hope they'll serve it up with greens."

And then the boy turned and darted out of sight, along the street, whistling on his way.

The young rascal had not perceived me at the window above.

"A present for me, Samuel, at this late hour!" cried Graham, as the servant entered the room bearing the square box before him, and announcing the message given by the boy.

"By the holy St. Patrick!" chuckled Murphy; "but I trust 'tis a gallon of whisky from my own sweet city of Cork."

"Or some fried oysters," added Winchester, "for they'd come in nice now."

"'Tis a present from some friends in Scotland, I'll engage," said Hector Maxwell.

"Perhaps it's an infernal machine, George," I suggested, as I noticed the young man's pallid face. "Have you any enemies who, you think, would wish you out of the way?"

"Infernal nonsense!" Murphy interrupted, as he laid his hand on the box, which the servant had placed on the table. "See, here's a note glued on the top of it. By heavens! but I'll wager five pounds that I'm right. 'Tis whisky is inside it. I can smell it already, and fine stuff it is!"

"Read the note, George," I suggested.

My cousin tore the note from the top of the box, opened it, and commenced to read the contents.

In the meantime, I was examining the outside of the box; and I saw that it was made of mahogany, that it was about fourteen inches square, and that it was fastened by a simple lock.

"This is a practical joke by some friend, I think," said George Graham, holding the note before him. Listen to what he says:

"'GEORGE GRAHAM, ESQ.: Remembering that it is your twenty-third birth-night, a thoughtful friend sends you a curious present, which he is assured you will preserve while you live.

"'The donor will make himself known very soon, perhaps—if not in this world, certainly in the next. Fear not to use the key herein inclosed, and display your prize to your friends. None of you will ever forget the rare curiosity.

"'From one who will cleave to you in

"'LIFE AND DEATH.'"

"Bad 'cess to the fellow, whoever he is," growled Miles, "to be reminding us of death, when we should be all life and merriment."

"Open the box," said Winchester. "I'll bet it contains a lot of fried oysters, after all."

"I stick to the whisky," Murphy persisted, as we all drew around the mysterious box, while George Graham held a small key in his hand.

"The lock is on the top," I remarked.

"There's no top, or bottom, or side to it," said Hector Maxwell.

"In with the key, and get out of our suspense," said Miles. "Sure, if it is an infernal machine, we'll be all blown to heaven, or to the other warn place together."

We all watched my cousin with eager eyes, as he placed the key in the lock of the box.

He had scarcely touched the spring, when the lid flew up and the four sides of the box gave way, falling flat on the table.

And then we all started, uttering cries of horror, for the object presented to us was sufficient to chill the blood in the warmest breast.

It was the perfect head of a beautiful woman!

George Graham stared at the face for a few seconds like one utterly bewildered; and then, clapping his hands to his forehead, he reeled backward like a drunken man, uttered a cry of anguish, and fell to the floor.

"Merciful heaven!" I cried, as I recognized the beautiful face, so perfect and life-like in death, "'tis Annie Cameron's head!"

"It is! it is!" gasped Winchester, as he clenched his hands in rage and agony. "Oh, what fiend could have perpetrated this cruel deed?"

"Cruel is no name for it," said Murphy, who had become as sober as a judge. "The arch-fiend himself had a hand in this inhuman work."

" 'Tis dreadful," said Hector Maxwell, as he stared at the beautiful face, from which the blue eyes were looking out with a smile.

"See the hair?" cried Miles. "There's the ringlets falling down so nicely. Man alive, sure it is not the head of a living person at all. 'Tis a wax figure, as sure as I'm sober."

" 'Tis a human head, gentlemen," I said, "and the head of a lovely girl whom I had known for years. 'Tis the head of the lady who my cousin was engaged to be married to. A fearful crime has been committed, and we must expose the murderer. Do not touch the head until I summon the chief of the police. See to reviving my cousin while I'm away."

And seizing my hat, I hastened from the house, and ran as fast as I could towards the headquarters at Scotland Yard.

It may be readily imagined that I was fearfully excited by the terrible scene I had witnessed.

Yet, as I hastened along, the instincts of the detective became aroused within me, and I soon found myself forming a theory as to the motive of the murderer in seeking the beautiful head to grace the birth-night feast of the favored lover.

"The man who committed that deed," I muttered, "loved Annie Cameron, and hated George Graham. Who can it be? Annie was beloved and admired by many. Who could be fiendish enough to murder her, and then send her head to my unhappy kinsman?"

And then I thought of Richard Winchester, and the words uttered by George Graham on the day when he gave me the invitation to the fatal supper.

The young American was in love with Annie Cameron, and he had been rejected.

He knew that my cousin was the favored suitor, and that he would soon be her husband.

I have since learned that it is not well to trust in every man who presents an honest, open face; and even at that early day I had made it a rule not to place too much faith in appearances.

Yet, when I tried to imagine the young American as the murderer, I could not get my heart to work in unison with my surmises.

Another idea arose in my brain, and this time the impression became firmly fixed.

"The fiend who perpetrated the crime," I muttered, "was present to-night, to witness the effect on his work. Annie Cameron was murdered by one of the three men at the supper. Heaven pardon me if I wrong them, even in thought, but I am convinced of the fact. I feel it in my heart."

Then I placed Miles Murphy, Victor Maxwell and George Graham in review before me, as it were, and while I was yet examining them in my mind I arrived at headquarters.

Arousing the chief, and sending a messenger to summons a magistrate, I proceeded to tell my superior of the strange event which occupied my mind while he was yet putting on his clothes.

The magistrate arrived very soon, a taxi-cab was ready, and we hastened to George Graham's house.

My cousin had been placed on a bed in the next room, and when we arrived we found that he had somewhat recovered from his fainting fit; he was now a fit subject for a mad-house.

The young man was attended by a surgeon and his servants, who had hard work to keep him in the bed.

The room where we had supped was still occupied by Dick Winchester, Hector Maxwell, Miles Murphy—and the head.

By my advice, none of the servants had been admitted to the room, and none of them were aware that the ghastly object lay on the table.

The magistrate and the chief of police questioned us all in turn, but they failed to elicit any more information than what I had given.

The surgeon from the other room was called in and requested to examine the head.

After spending some fifteen minutes in the examination, he stated his opinion to this effect:

"This is the head of a young woman who was in the best of health at the time of her death. Her death was altogether unexpected by her. She could not have received the slightest warning.

"You will observe that there was even a trace of a smile on her face when the engine of death struck her. The head has been carefully preserved by an expert chemist. I imagine that death occurred about a week ago."

"Good heavens!" cried Winchester. "That cannot be possible. I saw Miss Cameron last night."

"This head has been severed from the body some five days ago, at least," insisted the surgeon, as he examined the arteries. "That question can be readily decided on the morrow."

"But to-night," said the chief of police, "we must find the murderer."

And then he called me aside, saying in as low a voice as he could command:

"Douglas, I will place this affair in your hands. What steps do you propose taking?"

"I will first hasten to Mr. Cameron's house and learn when his daughter disappeared, and with whom," I replied.

"That is right. And then?"

"Then I will go in search of the lad who brought the box here."

"Right again," responded the chief. "Hasten away, and I will remain here."

"Will you pardon me for offering a suggestion?" I asked.

"What is it?"

"Please keep an eye on these three young gentlemen, if you can, sir."

"Certainly, Douglas. I understand," remarked the chief, with a significant smile. "I don't like the looks of that Irishman."

Just as I drove up to Mr. Cameron's house a private carriage pulled up behind us.

The old Scotch gentleman himself, with whom I was well acquainted, alighted from the carriage, and then turned to hand out a lady.

At the same time the hall-door above was opened, and a flood of light came streaming out.

"Are you tired, Annie, my child?" inquired the old gentleman, as he handed the lady up the steps.

"Not at all, father," was the young lady's reply.

"Gracious heavens!" I gasped, as I stared up at the glowing face, "what mystery is this?"

The real Annie Cameron, in the full pride of health, and bloom, and beauty, was before me!

CHAPTER TWO

WORKING AT THE MYSTERY

MASTERING my emotions as well as I could, and not caring to tell the young lady of the dreadful spectacle at the supper-table, I stated that George Graham, being a little indisposed, wished to consult with Mr. Cameron on an important question.

The active old Scotchman rode back in the taxi with me, and on the way I told him of the scene at the supper-table.

When Mr. Cameron was introduced into the room where the head was lying, he started back like one suddenly struck with intense astonishment.

"Mercy on us!" he gasped. "It is the very image of my girl! I would have sworn 'twas Annie's head, if I had not left her alive fifteen minutes ago."

All present started at this announcement, and all eyes were turned on me for an explanation.

I gave the explanation in as few words as possible, assuring them that Annie Cameron was alive and well.

It is needless to say that my announcement only served to increase the mystery.

George Graham was soon informed that his beloved Annie was alive and well; but he would not believe her father, until his betrothed called on him on the following morning, and saluted him in the usual manner so common among engaged lovers.

My young cousin soon recovered his health, but he was fearfully depressed in spirits.

"Sandy," said he to me a few days after the supper, "I will never feel happy. I can never marry until the mystery of that head is cleared up. I am confident that it is the work of a vindictive enemy; and I feel that my life, and Annie's life also, are in danger."

I assured George that every effort was being made to unravel the mystery, and that I was engaged in the work with a determination to keep on while there was the slightest hope of success.

In the meantime, the authorities at Scotland Yard were not idle.

The chief had placed the affair in my hands, giving me full authority to employ as many assistants as was deemed necessary.

In the first place, I sought to find some one who could recognize the head, but I was not successful in my efforts in that direction.

Then I had the three young men who were my companions at the supper closely watched, but in such a manner as not to arouse their suspicions.

That spying did not avail me.

Next I bent my energies towards finding the lad who had acted as messenger in delivering the box at George's house.

The servant who had taken the box could not give me the slightest description of the saucy rascal, but he thought he would recognize the voice if he heard it again.

I felt assured that I would not only recognize the voice, but that I could detect the youngster if I ever saw him engaged in another war of words.

From the manner in which the lad had spoken and acted that night, I judged that he had lived in London for some time, and picked up many of the Cockney tricks.

A week passed away, and while I was as busy as a bee, I had not found the slightest clue.

On the eighth night after the supper a gang of burglars entered Graham's house, and stole a large amount of money he had received in the afternoon from Scotland, as well as some very valuable family plate.

"They are no common burglars, Sandy," said George on the following morning, when he called at headquarters to inform me of the robbery. "When you find the persons who sent me the head, you will probably find the wretches who robbed me."

"Then I will endeavor to find the burglars, George," I rejoined. "I will go in quest of them this very night."

From an examination of the premises, I concluded that my cousin had been robbed by professional burglars, but that they had been assisted by some one who was quite familiar with the house and its inmates.

On the evening after the robbery I went to a famous sporting-house in St. Giles, which was kept by an old retired pugilist.

This house was much frequented by the cracksmen of the top-sawyer grade, fellows who only worked for a big game, and who lived like fighting-cocks after making a strike.

Being disguised as a mechanic, and wearing a Scotch cap and a huge black beard, while speaking the broad Edinburgh dialect when calling for beer, I took a seat at one of the tables in the crowded room.

I was watching a pair of pugs boxing away on the stage, when the sound of familiar voices attracted my attention.

Turning quietly, I recognized the three young gents who had been my fellow-guests at the strangely-ending supper at my cousin's.

"I could box better than that myself," remarked Miles Murphy, as he sipped his ale out of a pewter mug. "They're not worth wasting time looking at."

"We'll see better sport soon," remarked Dick Winchester. "Let us wait a while."

"By all means, let us wait," said Hector Maxwell, as he cast his eyes around the crowded room as if in search of some one. "The Exeter Slasher and the Brighton Bully will soon set-to."

"Will you have anything more, gentlemen?" asked a voice that made me start.

I looked cautiously at the speaker, and saw that it was a smart, nice-looking bar-maid, who was waiting on my friends of the supper.

"My gracious!" I thought, as I peered at the girl from under my Scotch cap, "how like the voice of the lad who brought the box her voice sounds! I must manage to speak to the lassie."

Finishing my ale at a draught, I knocked gently at the table, to attract the girl's attention, and in a moment she was at my side, asking:

"What will you have, sir?"

"A mug of ale," I replied. "I say, my good lassie, can I ask you a civil question?"

"A hundred, if I had time to answer them," she replied, with a pleasant smile; "but you can see that I am very busy to-night."

"All I ask is one," said I, "and that is a very simple one. Have you a brother?"

The girl started on hearing the question, and then looked earnestly at me with her piercing eyes, as she asked, in turn:

"Why do you ask me that question, sir?"

"Because I met a lad not long since that resembled you very much, lassie. I mean no offense, I assure you."

"Where did you meet the lad?" inquired the bar-maid, with a bewitching smile.

"In Edinburgh."

"I have no relations in Edinburgh," said the young girl;

"at least, that I know of. I came from the south of England, and my mother was French."

And she shook her head at me in a sly manner as she moved away, with a look on her face that said: "You must try some other dodge, mister, if you want to get acquainted with me."

The three friends at the next table had heard my conversation with the girl; but as I changed my voice as well as my face, I was certain that they had not recognized me.

When I had finished my ale I arose from the table and left the tavern, muttering:

"I'm going to watch you to-night, lassie. If you have a brother I'll find him out. I'll change my disguise and go back there again."

In less than half an hour after, I was back in the tavern again; and this time I appeared like a young London swell out for a night's frolic.

The girl was still waiting on the customers, and I continued to watch her every movement without attracting attention.

Before I was many minutes engaged in that way, I drew my own conclusions concerning that pretty bar-maid, and they may be summed up as follows:

She was not long accustomed to wait on people in a bar-room, though she was neither slow nor shy.

She had other motives in attending there besides serving out ale and porter.

She was intelligent, discreet, and watchful, and she managed to bear secret communication from one customer to another, while her actions when thus engaged could only be detected by the keenest eye.

To sum up: Midge Vail, as the bar-maid was called, was playing a skilful and delicate part in that bar-room, and she was playing it to perfection.

The three friends of the ghastly supper-table remained in the place until a late hour.

Just as they were about leaving together, I noticed Midge dropped something into Hector Maxwell's coat-pocket, while she stepped on his foot at the same moment.

"What's this?" thought I. "Does Hector know this lassie? On my word, but this is becoming very interesting."

Very soon after the young men left the tavern I saw that Midge was also making arrangements for leaving, and I slipped out into the street with the intention of following her home.

I had not long to wait.

The girl, muffled up in a shawl and wearing a veil over her bonnet, tripped out of the private door at the side, and stepped in the taxicab waiting for her around the corner.

As the taxi passed me, I looked in, expecting to see Hector Maxwell by her side.

But, to my astonishment, I beheld George Graham, my gloomy-minded cousin, laughing away as merrily as though he were riding to the chorus of marriage-bells with the lady he loved.

"What infernal work is this?" I asked myself, as I hastened after the taxi with the purpose of taking another and following them. "'Tis mystery on mystery, and no mistake, and I must see the game out."

I soon met another taxicab, and showing my private badge to the chauffeur, I ordered him to follow the other and not to lose sight of it on my account.

The man kept on in view of that mysterious pair, until we gained the neighborhood where my cousin resided.

"Can it be possible," I thought, "that he is taking the girl to his own house?"

And that, indeed, was their destination.

The taxi pulled up within a few doors of where George Graham lived; and without stopping my own machine, I sprang out when it turned the corner, flung a half-crown to the chauffeur, and motioned him to wait for me some distance away.

Then I hastened to watch the mysterious pair.

George Graham conducted Midge Vail to a private side-door, and they both entered.

Being somewhat impulsive, I muttered to myself, as I approached the door:

"I'll take the bull by the horns, and expose this rascally cousin of mine at once. What business has he, while engaged to a young lady, to be introducing a bar-maid into his house in that way? I'll demand to see him."

I strode up the steps of my cousin's house, while the taxicab still remained a few doors away, and rang the bell in a vigorous manner.

After waiting some time, while I kept preparing myself for assailing my cousin for his conduct, a voice coming through the keyhole inquired:

"Who's there? What do you want?"

"I want to see George Graham on important business," was my reply.

"He's not home," replied the voice from the keyhole; "he went to Scotland to-night."

"That is not the truth, friend," was my remonstrance, "for I saw him enter by the private door a few minutes ago. I'm a particular friend, and I must see him."

"He's gone, I say, and you can't see him to-night," replied the voice inside. "Go away, and don't be keeping honest people out of their beds, whoever you are."

"Very well," said I, as I turned to go down the steps. "Your master will dismiss you to-morrow."

As I walked down the steps, I could hear a mocking laugh inside the door; and felt tempted to return and force entrance.

But I reflected that the easier course would be the wisest, and walked away, determined to seek my cousin in the morning, and have a full understanding with him as to his actions.

The fact that the taxicab still remained where George Graham had left it, told me that it would be used again that night; so I resolved on watching its movements, as well as the maneuvers of those who would offer to use it.

Walking along for some distance, I took up a position in a deep doorway, whence I could watch the movements of those coming out of the house.

I waited just half an hour, but it appeared like an age to me, when I perceived two male figures emerge from the private passage bearing a large trunk between them.

By the light from the neighboring lamp I recognized one of the men as George Graham, while the other appeared to be a mere youth.

Leaving my hiding-place, I walked along at a brisk pace, and I was in front of the taxi-cab just as the boyish figure was entering it.

It took only one close glance at that figure for me to recognize that youth.

It was the lad who had delivered the box containing the mysterious head.

Springing forward, I seized the lad by the shoulder, as I cried:

He burst out into a mocking laugh as he clapped his two hands to his nose in a peculiar fashion, and then said:

"You can't come it on me. Give it to him, Ben."

The chauffeur did give it to me with a vengeance, as I

was stretched on the ground in an insensible state the very next moment.

When I opened my eyes again, I was lying in the private hospital at Scotland Yard, and forty-eight hours had elapsed since my chauffeur picked me up near Graham's house.

Then I learned from the chief that my cousin had disappeared in the most mysterious manner. But I managed to trace them to the pier of an American line of steamers.

When I was able to realize the true state of affairs, I asked the chief's permission to be permitted to follow up the mysterious business.

"What steps do you now propose to take?" inquired the chief.

"I propose to proceed to America at once, sir," said I. "I feel that I will there unravel the mystery of this severed head, and George Graham's disappearance."

"And the burglary, also?" inquired the chief.

"I will find the burglars at the same time, sir," I rejoined. "The man who robbed George Graham was at the supper that night."

"You suspect that wild Irishman, then?" continued the chief hintingly.

"I do not, sir. I suspect Hector Maxwell."

"Have your own way, Douglas," concluded the chief; "but I think you are mistaken."

Just as soon as I was able to move about, I went in search of Hector Maxwell.

And then I learned that he had left London for America, and that Miles Murphy and Richard Winchester went with him.

I could not learn a word about George Graham's whereabouts, nor could I find any trace of the young girl who had acted as a bar-maid.

CHAPTER THREE

WATCHED BY UNSEEN EYES

BEFORE leaving London, it was necessary for me to pay some visits connected with the business I had embarked in.

Calling on Mr. Cameron and his daughter, I found them in grief over the strange disappearance of George Graham, who had basely neglected the young lady who was to have been his wife.

Her indignant father swore, and said to me:

"The wretch had disgraced himself forever. He will never be received into my family."

"I believe George has been bewitched in some way, sir," said Annie, "or he would never have acted as he has. To think that he should fly in that manner, without a word or a line to me! I know he must be crazy."

Annie's words furnished me with a clue to some of Graham's actions. I figured that my cousin had either been entrapped by a band of thieves, or he was infatuated by the charming girl who had acted as bar-maid on the night of the flight.

On making inquiries of the landlord of the sporting-house, I learned that the girl in question was a circus performer out of employment, whom he had engaged through an advertisement, for the busy nights. Her specialty was feats of strength.

The landlord could not tell me anything about the girl's previous life, and he could not, or would not, give me the slightest intimation as to her movements after the night of my assault.

My reason for suspecting that Maxwell was the mover in the plot against Graham were very vague indeed.

I never liked the young man, in the first place; and felt confident that he was well acquainted with the girl who had eloped with my cousin.

Feeling assured, after that night's adventure, that the boy who had left the head at George Graham's house and the young girl at the tavern were one and the same person, I concluded that Hector Maxwell knew all about the business.

As the young man was only a poor medical student, and with no enviable character in Edinburgh, I imagined that he would not be above sharing in the spoils stolen or forced from Graham.

Before leaving London, I learned that George had mortgaged all his property in Scotland, and that he had been speculating heavily in railroad stocks in London, as well as in questionable mines elsewhere.

I learned, moreover, that Miles Murphy had been dabbling in railroad shares also; and that he left England to avoid arrest for some question of treason against the government.

And then, on making inquiries of some American merchants, I was informed that Richard Winchester's father was a poor doctor in New York, and that the young man, instead of receiving a fine income lived principally by his wits.

As the mysterious head had been embalmed and removed to police headquarters on the morning after the supper, I prevailed on the chief to let me take it to America, as I believed that it would at length be the means of enabling me to unravel the whole affair. It had been placed in a chemical solution to preserve it.

Placing it in my trunk, together with my somewhat scanty wardrobe, I set out for Liverpool to take the steamer for New York.

Assuming the humble garb of a mechanic, I engaged steerage passage on the steamer, being resolved to save my limited means as much as possible, in order to carry out my pursuit.

I had an odd feeling creeping over me while down in the steerage, on the night before that on which the steamer reached New York.

I was kneeling over my trunk, arranging my clothes for going on shore, when some of my fellow-passengers came along.

"I hope it's some whisky you have in that queer-looking box," said one man, with whom I had formed a slight acquaintance during the voyage, "so as to give us a good drink the last night on board."

"It's not whisky, friend," I replied. "It is a curious invention that I hope to make a fortune on in America. I can't show it until it is patented."

I turned around as I spoke, to scan the passengers, for I felt a peculiar, creeping sensation; but I could not observe any one whom I could suspect of taking any undue interest in the mysterious head in the box.

The sensation left me very soon after, and went on deck for a promenade before retiring.

When I returned to my berth again I found that it was impossible to close my eyes in sleep.

About the hour of midnight, and while lying on the berth in apparent sleep, though all my waking senses were in full play, that strange feeling crept over me again, and I could hear a movement below, as if some one was tampering with my trunk.

Keeping perfectly still, I could hear the slight jingling of a bunch of keys; and then arose a slight mutter of satisfaction as they turned in the lock of my trunk, and the lid was cautiously lifted.

"Here is a discovery," I thought; "is it some one who is anxious to steal my supposed invention, or can it be possible that it is one who is anxious to secure the mysterious head?"

Without giving the least sign of wakefulness, I managed to turn my head to the side of the berth, so that I could watch my secret visitor.

By the dim light suspended in the steerage, I could perceive a small figure, wearing a cloak with a hood, in the act of withdrawing the box from the trunk and placing it under the covering.

"I will not spring out on you now," I thought; "but I will track you to your berth, whoever you are. If you are only a common thief after my invention, I can soon claim my property."

The silent thief soon withdrew from the side of the berth and made for the companion-way leading up on the deck.

"It is not a steerage passenger," I thought. "Great goodness!"

Just as I was about to spring out of the berth in pursuit, having my stockings and pantaloons on, the stranger turned towards me again, and holding the box under the cloak, placed her two hands to her nose, in that derisive and peculiar fashion presented by the unknown messenger on the night of the supper.

"The bar-maid!" I muttered, as I sprang up the companion-way in pursuit.

Moving as fast as possible, and as quietly as a fox, I gained the deck, and started towards the cabin.

I noticed the young woman in the cloak standing near the bulwarks, and in the act of flinging something into the sea.

Without uttering a word I sprang forward, and seized her by the shoulder, as I whispered:

"You have destroyed the head, but I——"

Before I could utter another word, the creature turned suddenly upon me, struck me a fearful blow in the face, and then seizing me around the waist with surprising activity and strength, lifted me up and flung me over the bulwarks.

"If you think so much of the head, go after it," she exclaimed.

Striking out as well as I could, I howled at the top of my voice:

"A man overboard! Help! help!"

While thus struggling, my hand struck a hard substance in the water, and I grasped it. The thing floated, as it was airtight.

"The box with the head. This is most fortunate, if I do not perish in the ocean," I thought.

Fortunately for me, I was a good swimmer, and was not encumbered with much clothing.

While watching the steamer, I heard cries of alarm in response to my own, and could see lamps flashing at the side of the vessel as the propellers were reversed and the boats were lowered by seamen.

"Where away?" cried a cheering voice, as the boats pushed from the steamer.

"Here I am," I responded, "almost in your wake."

In less than ten minutes after I was standing on the deck of the steamer, addressing the captain.

"You have a murderer on board your steamer, Captain. I am an officer from London, in quest of some crooks, and one of them attempted to take my life to-night."

"That is monstrous!" exclaimed Captain Williams, as he stared at my dripping form. "We must make search for the miscreant. What have you in that box, sir, that you prize so much?"

"If you will take me to your private office," I replied, "I will show you, and explain my mission."

"Come with me," said the courteous captain, leading the way to his cabin. "If there's any crooked work on board this steamer, I will aid you in catching the wretch."

"Prepare yourself for a strange sight, Captain," I said, when we had gained the cabin, and I had closed and locked the door. "I have the head of a woman in this box. A murdered woman, I believe."

"You astonish me. Gracious heavens! I know that face well!"

I had opened the box, and the captain was staring at the mysterious head with eyes that seemed about to dart from their sockets.

"You know that face?" I asked, as the man continued to stare at it.

"Certainly. Why, the young lady was a passenger with me from New York four months ago. What am I talking about? She is a passenger now. She was at the supper-table this very evening."

"That is simply impossible," I answered in firm but respectful tones. "You are mistaken. That head has been severed from the body a month at least."

"This is a mystery indeed!" gasped the captain, still staring at the box. "I could swear that the owner of that head was my passenger from New York to Liverpool four months ago."

"That is very possible, Captain; but you also say the lady is now on board?"

"And so she is, sir. Now I begin to realize that there was cause for secrecy. Such a wonderful likeness I never beheld."

"If you give me your ear, and promise to be secret, I will tell you all about the mysterious head. In turn, I will request you to tell me all you know of the passengers whose faces resemble this one."

"Certainly, sir," replied the officer. "And I will assist you all I can besides. Take a drink of this brandy after your cold bath, and then go on."

I told the captain all about the scene at George Graham's supper-table, as well as my other adventures in London and on the ship.

"And so they tried to send you after the head, eh," said the captain, who had listened to my story with glowing eyes. "Now I will tell you about my experience in the strange business."

"About the young lady who was your first passenger, if you please?"

The captain looked at the mysterious head again, as he went on:

"I remember her so well, for she was a sprightly, laughing creature. It was said she was a circus performer on her way to London; but I never inquire about my passengers' private business.

"She was entered on our books as Mrs. Maggie Duncan; and she told us that she was of Scotch origin, and that she was going to London to join her husband, who was an actor.

"She left the vessel when we arrived at Liverpool, and I saw no more of her until she came on board the evening before we sailed on this trip."

"On this trip!" I repeated. "Are you certain it is the same person, Captain?"

"I was certain; though when I addressed her as an old friend, she told me I was mistaken. As she seemed to be like one in great distress, I did not seek to annoy her, but addressed her by her new name during the voyage. Were it not that I could not be mistaken in the faces, I would hardly take them for one and the same person, sir."

"How it that, Captain?" I inquired, as I fancied I saw a little light on the mystery.

"My present passenger is so quiet and reserved, you must know, while four months ago she was the gayest of the gay."

"What name has your new passenger given?" I inquired.

"She calls herself Miss Annie Campbell, and says she is a governess, going to America in search of employment."

"Her real name is Annie Cameron," I said, "but she is going to America in search of a truant lover."

"Well, the young lady who is the exact image of that head is now a passenger on board," declared the captain.

"We will prove it in the morning, sir," I replied. "I knew Miss Cameron since she was a little girl. I know her father. When I speak to her she will not decline to recognize me."

I thanked the captain for the interest he was taking in the mystery, and, on inquiring, he told me he would furnish me with a suitable disguise, which would help me further.

I remained in the captain's cabin that night, but we did not sleep a wink.

On the following morning I was supplied with a suit of uniform, and a false beard from my own trunk, and busied myself in some simple duties in which the captain had instructed me.

The box and the jar containing the mysterious head were placed in the captain's strong-box in his office, and strict instructions were given that no one should enter the room on any plea.

At the breakfast-table I saw and recognized Annie Cameron; but did not get a chance to speak with her in private until the following evening, when the steamer was lying off Staten Island.

The distressed girl admitted to me that she was in quest of her runaway lover, and that she was acting against her father's wishes.

"Oh, I know," she said to me, "that poor George is insane. He has been bewitched in some way. He was always a little superstitious, you know; but he has acted like a lunatic now. If I can find him, I am sure to attract him back to his friends and to his senses."

"I hope so, Miss Cameron," I answered. "In the meantime I will be your protector. Those who are plotting against George Graham may seek to injure his betrothed in some way."

Annie had a brave heart, and she did not quail at the danger that threatened her.

In the meantime I was on the lookout for the person who had twice threatened my life.

I had an excellent chance of observing the passengers as they left the steamer, but failed to recognize my assailant among them.

"Her disguise is thorough," I muttered to myself, as the last passenger left the ship. "She is cunning, strong, and daring, but I will be even with her."

CHAPTER FOUR

IN A TRAP

ANNIE CAMERON did not leave the steamer with the other passengers, nor did I.

When the gloom of night was over the great city we were moored to a dock on the North River, from which we proceeded to a quiet boarding-house, where Captain Williams had made preparations for our stay as brother and sister.

My purpose for this movement will be apparent when it is stated that I felt that we would be watched by one enemy, at least.

On conversing in private with Annie that night I secured some very important information.

Hector Maxwell had made love to her, and so had Richard Winchester.

Miles Murphy had offered her his hand and heart; he was half-tipsy when she refused him, and swore that he would force a quarrel on George Graham and shoot him in a duel.

Then I told Annie—and she learned the facts for the first time—all about the mysterious head, which was now in my trunk.

The girl requested me to show her the object that had caused her lover so great a shock, and I complied. It horrified her, of course.

After looking at the head for some time, Annie turned to the looking-glass for a few moments.

"It is my exact image," she said. "It was no wonder George was shocked. Heaven give power to find him, and to save him from his enemies. My poor, dear George!"

Annie looked at the head again, and asked in calm tones:

"What object did you have in bringing that thing with you?"

"I hope by it to trace the murderer, Miss Cameron," I replied. "Captain Williams has already recognized it as belonging to a young circus actress who called herself Maggie Duncan! If I can only find others who will know it, I will soon get on the right track."

"Do you propose to place it on public exhibition?"

"Oh, no. In the first place, I propose to show it to Dr. Winchester, Richard's father, and see if he recognizes it. Then I will show it to some of the circus managers here in New York, and learn from them if they can tell me about this Maggie Duncan and her friends."

"I understand you, Mr. Douglas," said Annie, with a bright smile; "but would not I answer your purpose as well? I could go with you to the gentlemen you mention, wearing a heavy veil, and throw it off suddenly at a word from you."

"A splendid idea," I replied, more and more impressed with my new ally. "We will first pay a visit to Dr. Winchester. Remember that we may be watched. We must not stir out of this house until we can assume thorough disguises."

"Very well. I am in your charge. Direct me what to do, and do not imagine that I fear to encounter any danger."

We remained quietly in the boarding-house for two days, but were not idle.

There was an old school-mate of mine named Tom Grant, who was engaged as a reporter on the *Herald*, and I sent him a note, requesting him to call at the boarding-house.

Tom called promptly; was delighted to see me, and promised to do all in his power to assist in solving the mystery of the head.

My friend was discreet, active, and faithful; and he soon brought valuable information.

Miles Murphy was in New York, in a somewhat shabby condition, endeavoring to get employment on the press.

Richard Winchester had returned to his father's house for a short time, only to disappear again; and the old doctor, who was not proud of his son, could not tell anything about him.

No person answering a description of Hector Maxwell was ever seen in company with Miles Murphy.

The New York circus managers knew nothing about a person calling herself Maggie Duncan.

Tom Grant supplied me with the information twenty-four hours after he had first called.

"Do you know any young lady connected with the New York theaters," I asked my friend, "who is possessed of great strength and activity? One who is able to cope with a powerful man in a contest. The woman I am in search of is of medium height, with a fair, pretty face, merry eyes, and a lively manner. When not playing in circuses she may be doing a vaudeville sketch."

"I did know a person answering your description, Sandy," replied Tom; "she was more of a circus-rider than an actress. She was as smart as fury—this Midge Vail."

"Was she strong in the arms, Tom?"

"She could lift a barrel of flour, and she could run as fast as Mickey Free."

"What was her character?" was my next question, with a presentiment that I was growing a little warm in my search.

"Very bad. Midge Vail was an adventuress, pure and simple. She could be as charming and as simple as an angel when she pleased; and she was a perfect fury at other times."

"Do you know what has become of her?"

"She went to Europe about four months ago. Her mother was a French circus-rider, and her father, I think, was an English actor."

"Would you be likely to know if she had returned to the city?"

"That depends on how she fared abroad. If she made a ten-strike, she will not return to the circus until the money is gone."

"Has this Midge Vail been known to assume disguises?"

"Thunder, yes. She used to travel around sometimes as a young sport and attend boxing-matches. She can put on all the airs of a lady when she wants to, or she can act the part of a waiter-girl to perfection. I tell you candidly, Sandy, if you are after Midge Vail, you have an ugly customer to battle with."

After warning Tom to keep on the watch for me, and to remain silent, I made up my mind that I would pay a visit to Dr. Winchester's with Annie.

We started for Broome street at night, and Annie wore a heavy veil, while I had assumed a disguise in which I felt I could defy detection.

When we reached the doctor's office, I noticed that there were two trunks in the hall, and a carriage stood in front of the door.

"I wish to consult Dr. Winchester about my sister's health," I said, as we were received in the plain office by a venerable-looking old gentleman.

"I am sorry to say, sir," replied the doctor, "that I have given up practise for the present. I am about to set out on a journey in a few minutes."

"That is annoying indeed," I remarked. "My sister is suffering from——"

"You will be late for the train, Doctor," cried a voice in the hall that caused me to start.

"Excuse me, sir," said the old doctor, hastening to the door. "My assistant and successor, a very able gentleman from Europe, will wait on you. I am going to a place I own near Paterson."

"Did you recognize that voice, Miss Cameron?" I whispered, as we heard the carriage rattling away with the old doctor.

"I did, my friend; it was Hector Maxwell's."

The office-door opened, and another old gentleman, wearing shaded spectacles, entered, saying:

"I am Dr. Winchester's assistant and successor, sir; can I tend to your call?"

I kept my countenance well, though I knew that Hector Maxwell stood before me.

Annie kept the thick veil over her face, as I replied, speaking in disguised tones:

"We are recommended to Dr. Winchester; but I presume you will do as well. My sister here is suffering from depression of spirits, and I fear it will turn into a decline, if not——"

I paused, as I observed a face staring in at me through the back-window.

It was a young face, and a fair-looking face; but the eyes fixed on me were glaring with passion.

"Pray go on, sir," said the doctor, as he turned to Annie. "Will you remove your veil, and let me examine your eyes?"

"I think we will wait until Dr. Winchester's return," I remarked, as I took Annie's arm and led her to the door. "The friend who recommended me to the doctor would not be pleased if we consulted any one else."

I was nervous—and for Annie's sake. The face at the window was that of the woman whom I believed was Midge Vail, the circus-performer.

I trembled for Annie, because I believed that we were in a den of crooks; and I was anxious to get out before we would be recognized.

I was armed, and so was Annie; but I did not want to endanger her life in a conflict with desperadoes who were seeking our destruction.

As we stepped into the hall, with Annie leaning on my arm, the gas was suddenly turned off, and we found ourselves in the dark, groping for the front-door.

Drawing my revolver, I placed Annie in front of me near the door, as I whispered to her:

"Open the door and go out. I will follow you."

Then raising my voice, I cried:

"What is the matter with your gas, Doctor?"

"I cannot conceive, sir," replied Hector Maxwell, in his natural tones. "My servant will open the door for you in a moment."

"The door is locked, and there's no key," whispered Annie.

"Stand back!" I cried, as I heard a stealthy step approaching, while I struck a half-circular sweep with my pistol. "I will shoot the first person who comes near us."

Placing my hand in my pocket, I drew forth some matches, and struck a light, as I continued:

"We are prepared for all emergencies. Cry for help, sister."

Seeing a figure approach me through the hall on the moment, I pointed my pistol at it.

"One step nearer, and I will fire!" I shouted.

At the same time Annie cried through the keyhole, in piercing tones:

"Help! Murder!"

A mocking laugh burst from the figure in front of me, and the person continued to move as if to seize me.

Aiming my weapon, I was about to pull the trigger, when a liquid substance, as if sent out of a powerful syringe, struck me in the face, and caused me to close my eyes.

"I am blinded!" I cried.

I dropped my weapon to the floor, and I lifted my hands to my smarting eyes.

"You will soon be worse off," cried a familiar voice, as I received a stunning blow on the head.

I fell on the floor insensible, just as Annie was seized and dragged from the door.

When I recovered my senses, I was in total darkness.

"Good heavens!" I muttered aloud, as I opened my eyes; "am I blind or dead? My arms and feet are bound. What has become of Annie Cameron?"

"I'm here, dear friend," replied a soft voice near me. "I am a prisoner also. I only wonder that we are not both dead."

"What happened to you, Miss Cameron?" I inquired in alarm.

"We are prisoners, in Hector Maxwell's power," replied the girl despairingly.

"Were you speaking to him, Miss Cameron?"

"I was. He says that I must become his wife, or I will suffer the fate of the girl whose head you have."

"The monster!" I groaned. "Where are we? Do you know?"

"In the doctor's house, upstairs. I saw that horrid woman. She dared to tell me that George Graham was her husband."

"And where is George?"

"He is here also," replied Annie, with a deep sigh. "He saw me, and fled as if I were a ghost. Oh, Mr. Douglas, I know he is insane."

"Are you bound?" I asked.

"I am. That wretch of a woman would have murdered me were it not for Hector Maxwell. George Graham is a prisoner here also."

"Hush! Here comes some one! I hear a footstep outside."

The door was opened a moment after, and the bar-maid of the London tavern entered the room, holding a lamp in her hand.

One glance around, and I saw that we were confined in a small room in which there were no windows.

We were stretched on rude sofas, and secured to the walls by ropes attached to iron rings.

Miss Cameron was so near that I could touch her, if my hands were at liberty.

Having glanced around the room, I turned my eyes toward the other woman.

She advanced to a small table at the side of the room, placed the lamp on it, and then turned to me, with a sweet smile, saying:

"How are you, my Scotch friend? Did you ever see Winchester since we met last?"

"Well, woman," I replied, "I have seen you, I believe, more than was pleasant."

"And felt my arm, also, eh. Oh, what a green fool you were to leave London on a wild-goose chase. I thought you would have more sense. Now, I see, we will be compelled to make you disappear."

"I am sure it is not the first murder you will have committed," cried Annie.

"Oh, my sweet dove," sneered the woman. "And so you must fly across the ocean after your truant lover, who is now my husband. Come in, George, and see your old sweetheart."

At this summons, George Graham came into the room, and stared around in a vacant manner until his eye rested on Annie Cameron.

"It is my dear Annie," he said. "Oh, Annie, Annie, I thought you were dead."

Before the young man could step forward to seize Annie, the woman flung a shade over the lamp and shrouded the place in darkness.

"'Tis only the mysterious head, George Graham. Embrace it if you will," she sneered.

The woman withdrew the dark shade from the lamp, and George uttered a cry of terror, and fell on the floor.

I looked on the sofa on which Annie Cameron had been reclining, but who had been unbound and was now standing in another part of the room, and I could not keep back a cry of surprise.

The sofa must have been lowered through a trap-door, for it had disappeared in a noiseless manner. In its place stood a small table, and on that table the mysterious head was resting.

"My dear husband has another of his fits on. Mr. Douglas we will have to send your head back to London, addressed to the chief of the Scotland Yard police," said the woman.

Two men, wearing masks on their faces, came into the room, lifted George from the floor, and bore him away.

CHAPTER FIVE

A CONFERENCE AND A SURPRISE

WHEN I saw the head, which I had left in my trunk in the boarding-house, lying on the table before me, I was fairly petrified with astonishment.

I paid very little attention to what the woman said at first, but kept staring at the beautiful face that so closely resembled Annie Cameron's.

"One would suppose you had enough of the head!" cried the woman. "And so you know my friend, Tom Grant?"

The question was asked in as pleasant a manner as possible, as the creature approached me with a bewitching smile on her face.

"Your friend?" I cried.

"My dear friend," she responded. "I'll bet you now he told you all about Midge Vail."

I was silent, for I was thinking it may have been that my old school-mate had betrayed me, and that he was captivated by the cunning being.

"Yes, you may know that my name is Midge Vail," she continued; "but you will never know the name of the young lady upon whose shoulders that head was resting in life. You will never know why it was sent to George Graham's supper."

"I know now," I cried.

"Tell me, then—that's a nice fellow. Why, you wouldn't be bad-looking at all, if you did not attempt these ridiculous disguises. Why was the head sent to George's supper-party?"

"To set him mad."

The woman started back, as if she had received a blow, and the pleasant smile vanished from her face.

"Whose theory is that?" she demanded, as her eyes flashed with rage.

"Mine," I cried. "I have thought so since that night,

and I am sure of it now. The head was sent to George Graham to set him crazy, so that you could rob him."

The woman's face assumed the pleasant smile.

"Well, I declare! You are not such a great fool as I supposed. The Scotland Yard police will lose a promising pupil in you."

"I am not dead yet!" I cried in desperation. "I will live to punish you and your friends."

"Who can save you?" she asked, with a confident smile. "Tom Grant, I suppose! He is the only friend you have in New York, except that old sea-fowl, Captain Williams."

"No matter how I will be saved," I replied, in confident tones, "you will not have the pleasure of sending my head to the chief of Scotland Yard. Oh, what a fool he was to suspect Miles Murphy."

"Miles Murphy, indeed! Why, that Irishman is my dear friend also. Would you believe that I have been his ruin?"

"I can believe that you would ruin any man who could be beguiled by your false smiles," I answered bitterly.

"And can I not beguile you with fair, honest smiles?" she asked, as she laid her hand on my throbbing brow. "Poor fellow! That whisky we flung in your eyes has affected your brain."

"Go away from me," I cried, as I made an effort to burst my bonds. "Oh, that I had you in my grasp."

"Do you think you are strong enough to hold me?" she asked. "Didn't Tom Grant tell you that I have strong arms?"

"And so have I, woman. If I were once free, I would defy you and all your friends. Oh, for the strength of Samson now!"

I made another desperate effort to burst my bonds, and then, as if in answer to my prayer, the cords on my arms and feet were torn asunder.

"What brought you in here?" I asked, rising.

"Well," Midge Vail remarked, undaunted at my freedom, "you must swear a solemn oath that you will return to London, and never again attempt to molest me or my friends."

"What! Go back to London without a prisoner!" I sneered.

"Oh, you can take a prisoner back with you, to show that you were not idle here."

"Who is that?" I asked, as I released Miss Cameron.

"Your prisoner will be welcome in England, I know. It is Miles Murphy, a political refugee."

"Miles Murphy!" I exclaimed. "How can I take him back on a political charge?"

I was now anxious to find out the full drift of the creature's suggestions, and evinced a deep interest in her propositions.

"There's nothing easier," she replied, with a very knowing smile. "You said a while ago that your chief at Scotland Yard blames Miles for that head business. Take him back on a charge of murder, and if you cannot prove that against him, why you can then hold him for treason. That will be a feather in your cap, in any case."

"You hate Miles Murphy, it seems," I remarked.

"Not at all. The fellow is not worth my hate. I plucked him of all he had, and simply despise him now. You want a victim—and there he is."

"Of course, Miss Cameron will be allowed to come with me?" I suggested.

"Oh, yes; Miss Cameron will be free to go when she pleases—with her husband."

"Do you mean that Miss Cameron must marry me?" I asked.

"You!" the woman exclaimed. "That is Scotch modesty with a vengeance. The wealthy heiress to wed a poor detective! Ah, 'tis just like you to look out for number one."

"I have no such presumption," I said, as I saw that Annie was annoyed. "Who is to be her husband, if you please?"

"Her old lover, Hector Maxwell, of course."

"The hateful wretch," cried Annie, with a visible shudder.

"I have already secured George Graham's fortune. Hector must have the handling of your money."

"Audacious!" I cried. "Was it you decoyed Miss Cameron out here for that purpose?"

"Certainly. I knew the silly thing would follow her lover; and took good care to encourage her. Why, I was a servant in her house for three weeks before she left, and while you were looking for me, the pretty bar-maid, I accompanied her to Liverpool, and there I gave her the slip."

It would have been perfectly justifiable on my part to play a deceitful game with this treacherous creature; and I would not have hesitated to even take a false oath in order to save Miss Cameron's life and my own, did I not feel assured that the woman would bind me in some other fashion.

The cunning creature observed my hesitation, and she seemed to read my mind.

"No tricks with me. You are arguing to yourself that an oath thus taken would not be binding on your conscience, and you suppose to play me false, you rogue."

"What is the use of prolonging this interview?" cried Miss Cameron.

"Will you have Mr. Douglas, here, then?" asked the woman abruptly.

Annie colored to the eyes, and turned to me with a faint smile, as she replied:

"Mr. Douglas knows that——"

"Don't mind the wretch, Miss Cameron," I cried. "Let us be done with this nonsense. Now hear what I have to say. By all I hold dear on earth, and by my hope of salvation in the future, I swear that I will attack you now, if you do not——"

"Fool!" cried the woman, as her eyes turned to the door. "See what's behind you!"

I turned, and could not see any movement at the door.

Annie turned her head at the same moment.

"This is folly," I cried, as I turned my eyes on the sofa again.

A cry of astonishment burst from Annie Cameron at the moment, and we both started back.

Midge Vail and the sofa had disappeared.

The mysterious head and the little table were standing on the spot!

CHAPTER SIX

A FOREBODING DANGER

WE stared at the head for a few moments only, and then sprang to the table on which the lamp was standing, seized it, and made for the door, calling:

"Follow me, Miss Cameron. I will fight my way to the outer door."

A mocking laugh arose as if from the floor, as I endeavored to open the door, which was secured on the outside.

"You fool!" rang out the voice I knew so well now.

"I did not answer, but took Miss Cameron's hand in my own, and whispered to her:

"Do not despair, my dear young lady. I will get you out."

Annie answered with a sigh that spoke her despair louder than words.

As I knew her to be a brave creature, I saw that she was more distressed by her lover's treatment of her that night than from any fear of consequences.

Standing near the door, I took a survey of the small room, and found that it was fitted up as a place to confine a prisoner.

I had noticed the exterior of the house before entering, and noted that it was a large building with iron bars on the windows.

"What can this house be?" I muttered aloud, as I saw the iron rings in the walls.

"A mad-house, I think, from what I have seen here to-night," replied Annie.

I then remembered that several American merchants in London, of whom I had inquired about Richard Winchester, told me that the old doctor was noted for treating nervous diseases.

"And George is kept here as a patient, I'm sure," continued Annie. "I saw him in the hallway as I was trying to unlock the door. You remember how he laughed at you when you threatened to shoot him?"

"Was that George Graham in the hall, Miss Cameron; are you sure?"

"Very sure indeed, Mr. Douglas."

We spoke in whispers, as we both felt that extreme caution was necessary.

I then moved over to the sofa on which I had been lying, and attempted to drag it aside, but found that it was firmly secured to the trap machinery below.

The table on which the head was placed was secured in the same manner.

Some minutes elapsed, while Annie and I conversed in whispers, and not a sound was heard throughout the house.

Moving along with the girl at my side, and holding a leg I took from the table, I examined the walls, the door, and the floor, in the hope of finding a way to get out of the room.

"If they meant to take our lives," I whispered to my companion, "we would have been dead now."

"The woman tried to murder you on board the steamship," rejoined Annie. "Why should she want to spare you now?"

"Because Tom Grant is on the lookout for us. He was waiting at the boarding-house for our return. He will come here in search of us, you may be certain. Tom is an able fellow, and he will ferret us out. That is the reason they fear to injure us."

"What do you imagine they mean to do then?" inquired Annie. "This suspense is fearful."

"If they intend to assail us, we will soon hear from them," I replied, as I listened for the slightest noise outside, while I watched the two traps at the same time.

While thus waiting, I pulled out my watch, which my assailants had not taken, although they had robbed me of every dollar I had in cash, and I found that it was just ten o'clock.

"We have been in here two hours," I remarked. "Tom Grant will soon be uneasy about us."

"Can you trust Mr. Grant?" inquired Annie.

"With my life," I answered. "There's not a truer man on the earth to-day. Let us wait a while, and I will see if I cannot force the door."

I spent half an hour working at the door, while Annie watched the traps; but I found that it would take me several hours, even with a chisel, to cut away the woodwork around the fastenings.

While I was thus working, Annie held up her hand and whispered:

"I heard a carriage rattling along the street, and think it has stopped outside."

I paused to listen, and we soon heard Midge Vail's voice ringing up through the trap:

"We have set the house on fire, and we are leaving for parts unknown. Sandy Douglas, you can make love to Annie Cameron for about fifteen minutes, until the fire reaches you."

A thundering uproar at the door below caused us to start; and then we heard a scampering of feet throughout the halls.

Placing my ear to the door, I listened with a hard-beating heart, for hope whispered to me that the knocking at the door was caused by Tom Grant.

"I think we have a chance," I whispered.

"I can already smell the smoke, I fancy."

It was only fancy on her part, however, for the house was not on fire.

"Open the door and let us in," I heard a sturdy voice exclaim. "Open, or we'll burst in at once, confound you."

We were on the second-story of the house, and I could hear Hector Maxwell's voice in the hall below, as he demanded:

"What do you want?"

"We want to see the gentleman and the lady who called here to-night!" cried Grant. "Open at once; I have officers with me."

Placing my lips to the keyhole, I yelled at the top of my voice:

"Break in on the rascals, Tom. We are prisoners in here. Help! help!"

"This way, Hector," I could hear the woman say.

The hall-door was burst in a moment after, and I heard Tom's voice roaring:

"Where are you, old fellow? Officers, do not let any one out!"

"Here I am, above you, Tom!" I yelled.

And then I kicked and shouted like a madman.

"Coming, Sandy!" cried Tom, as he sprang up the stairs. "Officers, a light!"

"Here's the door, Tom!" I cried. "I think it is bolted on the outside!"

"So it is!" cried Tom, withdrawing the bolts. "I came in time!"

"See to the young lady, Tom. I must get down and after the fugitives."

"Take it easy," cried Tom, as he offered his arm to Annie. "The police are outside in force, and they cannot escape."

"Hasten down, then," I growled. "Old Nick himself is not a match for that woman."

We went downstairs, where the police were guarding the door, and Grant asked:

"Have you made any arrests, Sergeant? These are my friends."

"We have not seen a soul, Mr. Grant," replied the police sergeant. "They must be hiding in the house, for they could not escape."

"Search the place, Sergeant," said Tom. "There's foul-

play here, as I supposed. Let one of your men take care of the young lady. Let us to work, Sandy."

We searched the house from the cellar to the garret, but we did not succeed in finding a human being.

Even the mysterious head had disappeared, although I was certain it was in the room where we were confined when Grant burst through the door.

The police could not say how our enemies had escaped from the house, and Tom asserted that there must be some secret hiding-place.

Leaving four officers in charge of the house, we adjourned to police headquarters, and I there made a statement of our adventures, giving an account of my mission at the same time.

"Why," said the New York chief of police, "a man has been arrested in the city to-day, who is charged by the chief of the Scotland Yard office with being implicated in the same crime."

"That is so, Sandy," said Tom Grant. "I had not time to tell you that Miles Murphy is the man."

"Who arrested him?" I inquired.

"An officer sent on from London," replied the chief.

I did not ask any more questions, as I felt assured that my chief, mistrusting my ability and perception, was working out his own theory.

After a full explanation with the chief, Annie and I proceeded towards the boarding-house, and Grant accompanied us.

"I am only a fool, Sandy," said the good fellow, as we walked along the street. "It was only within the last hour that I discovered the character of that house, or I would have warned you."

"How did you come to help us as you did, Tom?" I inquired.

"By mere chance. I was at the boarding-house, as agreed upon, at nine o'clock, and when I found you were not returning, I grew impatient.

"Strolling out, I made for the doctor's house, on Broome street, with the intention of inquiring about you there. As I was about to go up the steps, I met a policeman with whom I am acquainted, and I stood to speak with him.

"'Going in to see some crazy friend, Mr. Grant?' he asked, with a grin.

"'What do you mean?' I asked. 'Is this a lunatic asylum?'

"'A kind of private asylum, you know,' he replied. 'But I guess there are very few cases in there now. The old doctor has given up the business, and has gone to get his son out of a scrape.'

"'But the house is inhabited yet,' I remarked, 'for I see a light in the window.'

"'I believe there's another doctor taking hold,' replied the policeman; 'and I hear he's a Scotchman.'

"While we were speaking, we walked along from the house, and I saw the door open. To my surprise, my old acquaintance, Midge Vail, stepped out with a rough-looking fellow, saying:

"'Hasten, and get a taxi. We must catch the train at eleven o'clock.'

"The man walked by us, going toward Broadway, and Midge went into the house again.

"On the instant, I thought of you and what you had told me; and my first impulse was to go up to the door and demand to see her.

"After a few moments' reflection, however, I concluded that it would be best to summon more help, and leaving my police friend to watch the door, I hastened around to headquarters in Mulberry street, feeling assured that I could get back before the cab arrived.

"I did return, with a dozen officers, just as the taxi got to the door. The messenger got into the house by the basement way, and we arrested the driver of the machine, while we knocked at the door at the same time. As I told you before, Midge Vail is the mischief to beat."

"Do you think they are hiding in that house now?"

"No; I do not. I think they escaped by the back way, just as we broke in."

"I can't agree with you, old fellow," I said. "It seemed impossible for them to get away so quick. Besides, George Graham was in the house, and I believe he is mad. There are always secret hiding-places in such houses as that."

"When we have Miss Cameron safe at the house, we can return and give the place a thorough search. The officers will not leave the house until they are relieved in the morning."

We reached our boarding-house without much delay, and Annie retired, saying:

"Please be careful, Mr. Douglas. If anything should happen to you, I would be miserable."

The truth may as well be told first as last—I had learned to love the sweet, confiding creature.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONFIDING IN TOM GRANT

WHILE walking back to the house on Broome street, I gave Grant a clear account of the adventures encountered on account of the mysterious head, as well as explaining my theory of the subject. In fact, I took my friend into my full confidence, as I felt that so much was due to him after the signal service he had rendered.

"'Tis a very strange affair, in truth," Tom remarked; "and I cannot see through it."

"We will never see clearly," I remarked, "until we find out who was the owner of that head."

"And you say," said Tom, "that the head is perfectly preserved and life-like?"

"Yes. But why should they send the head to George Graham, unless, as I believe, there was a premeditated plot to set him mad. This Hector Maxwell knew that George was of an excitable, superstitious temperament."

"I see; I see," rejoined Tom. "The striking likeness to Annie Cameron's in the features of the head was intended to give the young fellow a shock that would affect his reason. And then, while he was in a weak state of mind, Midge Vail captivated him. Oh, she's a deep one, I tell you, Sandy. Here we are at the house."

We entered the hall and found two of the policemen in the front-room, which was evidently used as a sort of laboratory.

The machinery working the traps was in this apartment, and it was very simple and noiseless in its arrangement.

"See anything suspicious yet, officer?" inquired Tom. "You know the chief has given me permission to investigate this matter."

"That's all right, Mr. Grant," replied the officer. "We ain't seen or heard anything."

"We'll take another look at the basement, officer," continued Tom. "Will one of you be kind enough to hold a lamp for us?"

"The gas has been cut off, Mr. Grant," replied the officer. "I guess they were all ready to move, for there's very little of anything in the rooms."

We had noticed this fact before.

"What kind of a reputation did this Dr. Winchester bear in the neighborhood, officer?" inquired Grant.

"Well, sir, the old man is good enough. He kept a kind of a private asylum for half-crazy people here, but I never heard of any trouble about his patients. His son, though, is a hard case."

"What has become of him, officer?"

"I heard to-night that Dick got into some trouble in Philadelphia a few days ago, and I believe the old doctor has gone on to see him."

"What kind of a crowd did young Dick Winchester travel with?"

"Blacklegs, and worse. He was a hightoned fellow in his way, you know; but was a regular guy on the sly."

We were down in the basement at this time, and I was looking around carefully, in the hope of finding some secret opening into a hiding-place.

Finally I turned to Grant, and said:

"It seems they have given us the slip, for there does not appear to be any hiding-place from the basement."

"That seems to be solid," replied Tom, as he knocked on the wall; "and yet it is queer that there's no cellar under the back part of the house."

"A good many of the old dwelling-houses were built that way," remarked the officer who had charge of the party. "It saved digging and blasting; and there was more room around here than we have now."

I winked quietly at Tom, so as to inform him that I had made a discovery, and that it would not be well to speak aloud about it.

Remembering that Tom and I had studied the deaf and dumb alphabet together, I commenced to work my fingers, saying: "I think they are hiding near us."

"How do you know?" he asked.

"Oh, it's just an idea."

I saw that Tom smiled at my last remark.

"You needn't laugh," I said with my fingers. "They are near us. I haven't seen them, I haven't heard a sound, and yet I know they are here."

The officers were sounding the sides of the basement, and pushing their clubs into the closets, while Tom and I were carrying on this "mute" conversation.

Tom was puzzled, but he was too wise to show any indication of it.

"I am certain they made off, gentlemen," said the sergeant.

"Yes," I replied; "we are but wasting our time down here, when I should be looking for them elsewhere."

The officers went upstairs, taking the lamp, and Tom and I followed.

I was the last to leave the basement, and purposely left the door open.

When I reached the hall, I stepped down and commenced to pull off my boots, as I whispered to Tom:

"Tell the officers to keep moving around here, as if in search of the hiding-place, while you follow my example."

"What's up, Sandy?"

"They are hiding in some secret place in the cellar, and we must steal down on them in our stockings. Give the officers a quiet hint, look to your weapon, and follow me," I replied.

Tom's eyes glistened at the information; and he soon gave the others the cue.

Stealing down the basement stairs, and holding my weapon ready for instant use, I soon reached the foot of the underground apartment in the dark.

Tom was close behind, moving with the stealthy step of a cat creeping on a mouse.

When we reached the basement-door, we stood there in silence, listening to catch the slightest movement on the part of the hiders.

There was a slight grating noise in the corner where one of the closets was found; then a dim light came out in the basement; and a familiar voice, in a low key, fell on our ears, saying:

"I guess your two bulls have cleared out now, Doctor; and we can easily fool the policemen."

"I think it would be best to wait until the officers leave in the morning, Midge," returned a voice I recognized also. "It is a dangerous experiment you propose."

"And that's why I like it," responded the foolhardy Midge. "I never enjoyed myself better than I have to-night, Doctor. If I were sure Tom Grant and Sandy Douglas were gone, you'd soon see what fun I'd have with the stupid cops. That Sandy is rising in my estimation. I do hate to think that we'll have to hurt him."

"Perhaps you are falling in love with him, Midge," said Hector Maxwell. "I always thought he was a stupid ass."

"We'll see about that, Hector," I thought, as I pinched Tom's arm. "Oh, if we could only get into that other closet!"

The secret door inside the closet was closed again, as the light disappeared, and the voices could not be heard.

"Let us steal into that other closet," I whispered to Tom. "No; you steal out, and bang the street-door, as if you were going out. Then remain on guard in the hall with the officers. I will get into the closet. Then we'll have them between two fires when they get out on the stairs here."

"Very good," whispered Tom, and he commenced to steal back up the stairs.

As I had made a mental diagram of the basement, I was enabled to steal into the second closet without making the slightest noise.

There was no entrance to the basement from the street except through the coal-hole from the pavement to the cellar underneath; and I did not imagine that they would attempt to get out by that way.

While standing in the closet I commenced to imagine Midge Vail dealing with the officers, and was anxious to learn how she intended to act in the desperate game she was playing.

The more I thought about this daring creature, the more I became impressed with her wonderful genius for evil, and I felt assured that she was the head and front of the movement in which the mysterious head was so prominent.

I cannot but admit that I almost feared the woman; but it was that kind of fear that did no discredit to my personal courage.

I dreaded her power for evil when that power was especially directed against Annie Cameron.

While thus reflecting, keeping my ears open for the slightest sound, and my eyes turned in the direction of the other closet, I leaned somewhat heavily against the wall behind me, as if to brace myself for an outward spring when the moment for action had arrived.

Suddenly, and without the least warning sound, the wall gave way behind me, and I was precipitated backward, though I did not lose my footing.

Although very much surprised by the occurrence, I did

not lose my presence of mind, and fired my weapon at random, with the purpose of warning Tom and the officers of the accident.

Before I could turn around, or move forward, however, I found myself seized in the dark by strong arms; the revolver was torn from my grasp, and I was flung on the floor with great violence.

The glare from a dark-lantern flashed out as I struck the floor, and by its light I could see my assailants over me.

"Bind and gag him," said Midge Vail, as she pressed a pistol at my head. "Sandy Douglas, we were too smart for you. I will blow your brains out if you resist."

Notwithstanding the threat, I did resist with all my might, kicking and striking the two men who were attempting to bind me.

By a desperate effort I succeeded in gaining my feet, though the two men were clinging to me, and endeavoring to bear me down, and Midge kept hissing at me as she tried to assist the others:

"Keep still, or I'll put a bullet through your heart."

The woman, I have no doubt, would have carried her threat into effect, were it not for the fact that there was great danger of hitting one of her own friends while firing at me, as we were all in a heap as it were.

As I was thus engaged with the two men and the woman, another person appeared on the scene.

While I was struggling to regain my feet, I noticed a crouching figure in the corner of the vaulted apartment into which I had fallen.

I could get but a mere glance at the figure by the light of the dark-lantern; but that glance was enough to show me that it was my unfortunate cousin, George Graham.

Backing into the corner where George was crouching, I cried:

"George, will you stand by your old friend?"

"That I will, Sandy," cried George, as he sprang up suddenly, his eyes blazing with the fire of madness. "I'll fight the fiends with you."

"At them, then," I cried, as I made a dash at Hector Maxwell.

Before he could draw a weapon to defend himself, I struck him a powerful blow in the face, and knocked him off his feet; and then, feeling assured that he had a weapon about him, and that I could not maintain the struggle without one, I fell on him and clutched him by the throat with one hand while I thrust the other in his pistol-pocket.

Graham had sprung on the other fellow at the same time, and bore him to the ground with the fury of madness, as he kept yelling:

"I'll stand by you, Sandy, old fellow."

"Drag him off, or he'll kill me," cried the man. "He's choking me—the madman."

Midge did not offer to fly to the rascal's assistance, but she did spring to a corner of the vault and seized an object lying there on a box.

In the meantime, I kept pressing Hector Maxwell's throat as I fumbled in his pockets for a weapon, and I could observe the movements of the others.

Graham was pounding away at his victim's face, and uttering cries of triumph, when Midge sprang at him, holding something before her, as she cried:

"George Graham! George Graham, embrace your sweetheart's head!"

George stared at the mysterious head for a moment, uttered a piercing cry, released his grasp on the man's throat, and fell back insensible.

"There's one disposed of for a time," cried Midge, as she replaced the head on the box again. "And now to give Sandy a dose."

I had just succeeded in dragging a pistol from Hector Maxwell's pocket, when Midge and the man made a rush at me.

At the moment there was a tremendous knocking on the sides of the vault, and I knew that my friends outside were endeavoring to find an entrance to come to my assistance.

"I'll give him the club," cried the fellow who had been attacked by George.

And he did not spare me.

Just as the club fell upon my head, the pistol in my hand exploded, and the ball struck Graham in the leg.

Thud—thud—fell the club on my defenseless head, as the woman held my arms behind me.

When I opened my eyes again, I found myself lying on a sofa in the back-parlor of the house, and Tom Grant and a strange gentleman were standing over me.

"By Jove! but you had a narrow escape," cried Tom, as he pressed my hand. "You think he'll do now, Doctor?"

"I think he'll soon be all right," replied the doctor. "Don't stir now."

"What happened, Tom?" I inquired.

"Oh, it will be all right," replied the reporter. "You had a narrow escape. I'll tell you all about it by and by."

"Did you take them?" I inquired, as I thought of my assailants.

"We didn't, Sandy. I told you that Midge Vail was a born devil. She got off with her associates. But the doctor said you must keep quiet."

"What about Miss Cameron?" I inquired, as dark forebodings flashed on me.

Tom Grant's face grew sad, as he replied in serious tones:

"Do not distress yourself now, Sandy, or you will never get well. The doctor says you must have perfect quiet for three or four days at least."

"Three or four days," I muttered, as I thought of Annie Cameron. "I know some ill has befallen her."

I was badly beaten and very weak, and soon fell off into a restless slumber.

Throughout that troubled sleep, I dreamed of nothing but Annie Cameron, Midge Vail, and the mysterious head.

It was night when I awoke again, and faithful Tom was by my side.

CHAPTER EIGHT

WHERE WAS ANNIE CAMERON?

A WHOLE week had elapsed ere I was able to be out and around again.

Tom Grant had me removed to a hospital, where I received every care and attention, and you may be certain that, while lying there, I was pondering over the strange scenes through which I had passed.

"What has happened to Annie Cameron?" was my first inquiry when I could command my full senses.

"I am sorry to say that I cannot tell you, Sandy," replied Tom. "I have one of the best detectives in New York looking for her, and——"

"When and how was she lost, Tom?" I interrupted, a little impatiently

"When we succeeded in rescuing you that morning, I went right down to the boarding-house, after the doctor pronounced your wounds favorable, and there I heard that Miss Cameron had disappeared from her room during the night. No one could tell when or where she went, or what had become of her."

You may be certain I muttered certain loud and profane phrases on hearing this, mentally swearing, at the same time, that if anything ill had befallen Annie some one would suffer for it.

"Tell me all about the rescue now, Tom," I said, "for it is all blank to me."

"We heard your first pistol-shot, and it sounded as if it was fired in a well under the basement. We rushed down with a lamp as fast as we could, but could see nothing of you, to be sure. Then we were puzzled.

"Feeling certain that you were entrapped in some secret hiding-place, we all set to work to batter on the walls with axes, and whatever else we could lay our hands on.

"Knowing that you had stolen into one of the closets, we directed all our efforts to the finding of the secret openings therefrom; but we worked for more than an hour without any success.

"Then I proposed that we should get crowbars and demolish the brick-work behind the closets. Two of the officers were sent for crowbars, while the others, with myself, kept working away at the walls.

"The two officers had scarcely left the house when one of the others heard stealthy footsteps in the hall above.

"We had left no one, unfortunately, to guard the hall, as we were all at work in the basement."

"And the gang escaped by some other passage from the vault?" I remarked.

"They did, Sandy. We rushed up at once, just as the hall-door was closed, and then we ran out into the street."

"Well, well, Tom," I said, with a grim smile, "they gave you the slip."

"They gave us the slip, and no mistake. Then we searched the lower part of the house for another opening to the vault, and found a stairway behind a closet in the back parlor that had hitherto escaped our notice. We descended the stairway, burst open a door at the bottom, and found you lying in the middle of the floor, as if dead, while George Graham was gathered up in a corner, moaning and groaning."

"He is insane; the poor fellow! What has become of him?"

"He is in a lunatic asylum. Well, we thought you were dead indeed."

"I suppose they thought so, or they would have finished me," I said; "but they will soon find out that I am alive and active. Well, Tom?"

"Then we discovered the two doors leading out into the basement through the closets."

"What in the mischief kind of an arrangement was it?" I inquired.

"The doors were made of solid iron, inlaid on the outside with bricks, so as to resemble the wall," replied Tom; "and there are two vaults, one opening into the other. The vaults must have been originally intended as a place for storing money and valuables. Take the place altogether, it has a very suspicious appearance. The skeletons of three human beings were found in the vaults."

"And the police can find no trace of the men, or of Annie Cameron?" I asked.

"They cannot. They have also telegraphed to all the principal cities, inquiring for old Dr. Winchester and his son, but they disappeared mysteriously. It now turns out that the old doctor has made off with a large amount of money which he held as a trustee. Some say his son has robbed him."

"I thought the son was a prisoner in Philadelphia?"

"He escaped before his father got on there," replied Tom. "I hear it is a pretty difficult matter to keep the young fellow in prison."

"How long has Midge Vail been living in that house?"

"It appears she has been mistress here, off and on, for the past ten years. It is said that she is Dick Winchester's wife; you must know. Oh, isn't she the very devil?"

"She is. Is George Graham hopelessly mad? If he had his senses, he could help me to crush them, I imagine."

"The doctors say he may recover very soon, if he can be kept quiet. He has received a fearful shock, it seems."

"Several of them," I remarked.

And then I told Tom the effect produced on him by the mysterious head.

"It is a wonder to me that they have not killed George Graham altogether," said Tom. "Now that they have all his money, what can be their object in thus keeping him a prisoner so long, and with frightening him with this head?"

"I cannot say, unless it is to try and get more money out of his estates in Scotland. They may not be mortgaged to anything like their full value yet," I remarked.

"Blackmail, eh!" cried Tom. "Why, man, that gives me a chill. If they have kidnapped Miss Cameron, they are holding her for that purpose. It would be madness to force her to marry Hector Maxwell, for the sake of trying to get her fortune. The scoundrel can never appear in public again."

"Very true," I replied. "They can have no other object in kidnapping Miss Cameron, unless to force her to marry Dick Winchester, and swear her to silence, or holding her to extort money from her father. Now that I am alive to warn him of the forced marriage, they will turn on the blackmail dodge, I suppose. What about Miles Murphy?"

"Oh, Miles is in clover now. He swears that the charge of murder is all a pretext to get him back to England, and then hold him for high treason against the queen."

"I believe he had no more to do with the head affair than I had, up to the night of the supper, Tom," I remarked, as I thought of the foolishness of the chief in causing his suspicions to fall on the excitable Irishman.

"He sails for England in a few days, at all events," returned Tom. "You may be sure he will make a splurge there, for he swears he will denounce the government for arresting him as a murderer, and sue for heavy damages."

After gleaning all the information possible, I thanked Tom for his kind services, and told him that I would set out in quest of the fugitives and Annie Cameron as soon as I was able to travel.

"You don't mean to go alone?" said Tom in apparent surprise.

"Certainly."

"Now, that's what I call an unkind cut, Sandy," cried the big-hearted fellow. "Here I have made up my mind to join you in solving the great mystery about the head, and hunting down the rascals who are in with Midge Vail, and you cast me aside as——"

"But, my good fellow," I interrupted him, "how could I think of taking you away from your business?"

"My business be hanged! As to that I can do well for the paper by working with you in this matter. I have saved some money, and it is at your command, if you are short. If you think I am smart enough, let me go on with you. You must be very short of money."

I was very short of money, as the rascals had taken nearly all I had from me.

To be sure, I had authority to draw on the British consul for funds; but when I learned that the chief of the Scotland Yard force had sent another detective out on my mission, I felt that I was distrusted by him, and I could not think of drawing money in his name.

Therefore, I accepted a loan from Tom; and enlisted him as an assistant.

I now felt, more than ever, that my mission had become almost my private affair, and I made up my mind that if I did not rescue Annie Cameron and punish the men involved in the plot of the mysterious head, I would not look on the white cliffs of England for many years, at least.

Captain Williams' steamer had sailed again when I returned to the boarding-house from the hospital; but the kind-hearted sailor had called on me twice while I was an invalid.

From the fact of Dr. Winchester having gone to Philadelphia after his son, I concluded that the other members of the gang had faced that way; and I was on the point of starting out for that city with my friend Tom, when I received an unexpected visitor at the boarding-house.

It was old Mr. Cameron, Annie's father, who had followed his daughter to New York.

Reading in the papers about my affair in the doctor's house, the anxious old gentleman came to inquire about his only child, who had left England in quest of her lover, much against his will.

The old gentleman was terribly excited and angry when I told him that his daughter had disappeared in such a mysterious manner, and he swore that he would spend every penny he was worth to punish the men who had abducted her.

The arrival of Mr. Cameron delayed our visit to Philadelphia; and Tom and I spent another night in looking around New York in the hope of finding some clue to the whereabouts of Midge Vail and her friends.

When we returned to the boarding-house at eleven o'clock at night, we found old Mr. Cameron in a still more excited frame of mind.

"Read that, Mr. Douglas," cried the old gentleman, as he thrust a sheet of notepaper in my hand.

The contents of the note did not surprise me in the least, as I was prepared for such a movement on the part of our enemies.

It saved us a journey, however, for it proved that Midge Vail and some of her friends were still in New York.

The note was a demand on Mr. Cameron for ten thousand pounds for the release of his daughter, accompanied by a threat that if the money was not forthcoming in five weeks (giving him time to send to England by steamer), Annie would be injured.

"Who brought this?" I inquired, as I saw that it did not come through the mail."

"A boy left it with the servant-girl for me," replied Mr. Cameron. "When she asked him if he would not wait for an answer, he went off.

"'Tis Midge Vail," I said. "That woman has the impudence of Old Nick. Of course you will not heed this, Mr. Cameron?"

"I'd give every penny I'm worth to save my child," replied the stern old man, "but I'll not give them a pound."

"But we must draw them on, if possible, Mr. Cameron," I said.

Tom Grant laughed at this remark, and cried:

"Draw Midge Vail on, indeed. Why, man, she knows what she's about. If you think you can catch her by answering that note, you are mistaken. The answer is to be left at the *Herald* office, you see—by yourself, for instance. You will then lay in wait to watch the person calling for it."

"I would do nothing of the kind," I interrupted. "I would hire some trustworthy woman to do it."

"Hire me, Sandy Douglas," cried a voice at the door, that caused us all to start.

Drawing my pistol, I sprang to the door of the sitting-room which we were in, crying:

"Gracious thunders, if Midge Vail is not listening to us!"

I pushed the door open and sprang out into the hall, followed by Tom Grant and Mr. Cameron.

The gaslight was burning over the head of the stairway, but we could not see a living soul.

Thinking Midge had fled down the stairs, I rushed down, with Tom after me, and we both ran out into the street together, leaving Mr. Cameron in the hall, on the first landing.

We could not see any one in the street, as far as the eye could reach on either side, and we were about to return to the house, when a cry of pain and alarm burst from old Mr. Cameron, and we rushed upstairs, to find him lying in the hallway, half-stunned, and with the blood flowing from his nose.

"What has happened, Mr. Cameron?" I cried, as I raised the old gentleman up, while Tom Grant ran for some water.

"A rascally lad ran up to me in the hall and struck me in the face," replied the old gentleman. "As he did so, he said he'd murder me and my daughter, if we didn't send that money where it would be ordered."

"Midge Vail is in this house," I cried aloud, "and we must find her."

Drawing my pistol, I fired towards the ceiling, with the purpose of arousing the whole household.

CHAPTER NINE

ANOTHER MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE

THE woman of the house, and all the boarders and the servants as well, came rushing out of their rooms in the wildest commotion.

"What has happened?" asked the landlady, as she stood glaring at us.

"There are robbers in your house, madam," I answered. "I wish you would call the police, Tom."

"I think we can manage without them, my friend," said Tom, as he commenced to turn his attention to the alarmed boarders. "If two of the gentlemen will guard the door below the rascals cannot escape."

I should have mentioned that Tom and Mr. Cameron were now stopping in the house with me.

Two of the boarders volunteered to keep guard in the lower hall, and they went down the stairs.

Tom then suggested that all the lady boarders step into the parlor, while the gentlemen would examine the rooms.

"Sure, if there's a robber in the house at all," cried one of the Irish servants, "he had time to be out on the roof afore now."

"The roof; the roof, Tom!" I cried, springing up the stairs on the instant.

"Yes, yes," cried Mr. Cameron, who had now recovered from the effects of the blow. "The fiend ran up the stairs after he hit me."

I sprang up the stairs after Tom, with three or four of the male boarders after me, while the terrified women gathered in the parlor, afraid to venture into their own rooms.

Tom Grant mounted the ladder leading to the roof, and then paused a moment as he cried:

"The trap is not secured on the inside. Any one could get in or out here."

"I fastened it this evening," cried the servant before-mentioned, "after I came in with the clothes. That I'll take me oath on."

On looking around we saw that there was no one on the roof, or on that of the only house adjoining, which had also a trap or scuttle similar to our own.

"They may have entered the other house, and got off that way," said Tom, as he ran to try the trap.

It was secured below.

The people in the other house were aroused by the pistol-shot, as well as by the cries of the boarders, and we could hear some voices from the windows addressing people in the street.

On going to the edge of the roof, I saw police-officers standing on the pavement, and I cried out:

"Officers, will you please guard the doors of the two houses? We are after a crook."

"All right," replied one of the officers.

"Will you please ask the people in this house to open the trap on the roof, so that we may go down that way?" I continued.

"We'll open it," cried a voice from the window that caused us to start.

"By Jove," whispered Tom Grant to me, as he clutched my arm, "if that isn't Midge Vail's voice, may I never leave the roof."

"It is," said I. "We have her in a trap now, I think, Tom."

"The mischief a trap, Sandy, or she'd never call out in that way. You bet your hide she's up to further devilment to-night."

"The trap is open now, and let us get down, Tom," I returned. "Keep your own counsel, and we'll examine all the people in the house."

When the trap was opened, a man's head appeared, as the owner cried:

"A thief has escaped from the next house," I replied; "and we think he has got down into this house."

"How could that be when the scuttle was fastened on the inside?" grumbled the man.

The fellow's voice sounded strangely familiar to my ears, and I looked at him as well as I could in the uncertain light.

The fellow wore a large black beard that almost covered his face, and he had on a soft felt-hat pulled down to his eyes.

"Will you let us search the house?" I demanded, as I made a motion to descend.

"Are you an officer?" he grunted. "We don't want any strangers poking through our place. I tell you the trap was fastened all night, and nobody could come down through here."

"I'll soon call an officer," I cried, as I saw the fellow would oppose our entrance. "This is no time for silly nonsense, when we are after a thief who went down there. That thief is in this house and I am going to take him. Tom, you just ask one of the officers to come up here."

The man had turned to address some one on the ladder below him, speaking in a very low voice; and he then grunted forth to me:

"Come down here, if you like; but you won't find any of them in this house."

"We'll see about that," was my response. "Follow me down, Tom."

I was fully assured that Midge Vail and some of her friends were in the house, and that they would not surrender without offering a desperate resistance, so I held my revolver ready for use, as I placed my foot on the ladder, and turned to Tom, whispering:

"Be careful, Tom; and be on your guard. We will meet with enemies down here."

"All right, old fellow," replied Tom, "I'll be at your heels."

Before I had reached the bottom of the ladder another idea occurred to me.

Could it be possible that Annie Cameron was confined in this house?

If Midge Vail could enter by the scuttles, was it not possible for the daring creature and her accomplices to bear the missing girl away by the same means?

These thoughts caused my heart to beat the faster, while they moved me on to a full determination to explore the house at all hazards.

When I gained the floor I found myself in the dark, for the small opening in the roof threw no light around the place.

"Have you not a light?" I cried, as I held my revolver ready to counteract the least treacherous movement.

"The gas is lit on the next floor," said the black-whiskered man. "Come this way, and you'll see all you want."

"Tom, tell the folks above to keep watch on the trap, and ask a couple of them to follow you down here."

"There are two of the gentlemen right after me," replied Tom, who still kept close at my heels. "If the thief shows fight, we'll——"

"Come, and stop your loud talking!" cried the man in front. "There's a sick person on the next floor, and you mustn't disturb her."

"We must search every room in the house," I said, as I reached the landing on which the light was burning.

"Must you?" grumbled the man. "Appears to me you are acting as if you were the chief of police, and had all the power in the city at your back."

"I have enough power to make you show me all the rooms in this house," I responded, as I sprang forward and clapped my pistol to the fellow's head; "and more than that—you are my prisoner!"

The fellow started back and clapped a hand to his pistol-pocket, as he cried:

"If you touch me, I'll shoot you!"

"If you offer to raise your hands, Badger Ben," I cried, "I'll blow your brains out! I owe you a little spite already. Down with your hands, till I clap on the bracelets. Tom, cover him with your pistol."

"He's covered!" cried Tom, as he seized the fellow by the arm, and clapped his pistol to his head. "This seems to be an old friend of yours, Sandy."

"An old and a very dear friend," I remarked, as I clapped on the bracelets. "We first met in London one night, and he saluted me in a way that I will never forget while I live. Now, Badger Ben, let us see how you will look without this covering."

I pulled off the false whiskers as I spoke, and the Badger's face was present in all its ugly nakedness, while

his villainous eyes were glaring at me with a hateful expression, as he hissed:

"I'll be even with you yet, you duffer. You can't hold me long."

"We'll see, Badger. Call in the police, gentlemen, for we are in a den of thieves. Now, sir, will you show us where the sick lady is?"

"Roast me if I do," grunted Badger. "Find out what you can without my help."

"Open that door, gentlemen," I cried, as I pointed to a door from whence I fancied I heard a sound of suppressed sobbing.

"'Tis locked," said one of the boarders.

Tom Grant and I were standing guard over the Badger, waiting the coming of the officers, who were already ascending the stairs.

"Burst it in, gentlemen," I said, "and I will pay all the damages."

A few words of explanation were given to the officers, as I handed over my prisoner, and then I sprang towards the door, and flung my full weight against it.

The lock gave way, the door flew open, and I entered the room.

Then cries of joy and indignation burst from me as I sprang towards the bed on which the sick person was lying.

That sick person was Annie Cameron.

The poor girl's hands were bound, there was a gag in her mouth, and she was secured to a staple in the wall by a small chain attached to her waist.

Dragging the gag from Annie's mouth, and cutting the cords from her hands, I cried:

"Search for the woman who committed this vile outrage. She is in this house, officers, for I heard her voice a while ago. Oh, Miss Cameron, cannot you speak now?"

"Thank you, Mr. Douglas," replied Annie; "I knew you would rescue me."

"How did they bring you in here?" I inquired, as I took the staple from the wall.

"I cannot say, Mr. Douglas. I went to sleep after you left me at the house that night, and when I awoke I found myself a prisoner in this room, with that hateful woman standing over me."

"Has she been cruel to you, Miss Cameron?" I inquired.

"Very cruel, indeed. At first she tried to force me to wed that wretch, Hector Maxwell, and then, when I told her that I preferred death, she wanted me to sign a paper, calling on my father for a large sum of money. She told me that my father was in this city."

"And so he is, Miss Cameron. He is in the next house."

"Oh, I am so glad," exclaimed Annie. "I will go to him now. And poor George Graham, Mr. Douglas—where is George?"

"He is in an asylum, Miss Cameron. Come, and I will lead you to your father."

In the meantime, Tom Grant and the others were searching through the house for Midge Vail.

The doors at the front and back of the house were guarded by the police, and two of the boarders stood on the roof by the trap, so that it seemed to be impossible for any one to escape.

After taking Annie to her father, who received her with tears of joy, I hastened back to join in the search for the cunning Midge Vail.

The police-captain of the precinct had been summoned to the spot, and from him I learned that the house had been occupied by a young doctor since a few days after I went to board next door.

Then I knew that Midge Vail had been on my track; and that she had stolen into the boarding-house and robbed my trunk of the mysterious head while I was out in search of her confederates.

It was evident that she had entered the place by the front-door, which was only protected by a simple latch-lock, which was easily opened; and that she had made her way out by the roof when closely pressed.

I had yet to learn how the daring creature captured Annie Cameron; but I suspected that she must have a confederate in the boarding-house.

We searched the house from cellar to the roof, but we could not find Midge Vail or any of her confederates, save Badger Ben, who was taken to the neighboring station-house.

"How in the mischief could she have escaped?" I remarked to the police-captain and Tom Grant, as we stood together in the hall after our vigilant search. "I am sure I heard her voice speaking from the window."

"I am not surprised at anything she does," said Tom Grant. "I'll bet five-dollars we'll hear from her again this very night."

"Is she so clever, then?" inquired the police-captain, who had not received much information about the bold and cunning woman.

"Clever is no name for it," replied Tom Grant. "I never met her equal for courage and cunning."

"Let us go into the other house, and see if any of the boarders are missing," I suggested. "Captain, will you leave some of your men in charge here?"

"Certainly," was the captain's reply. "The woman may be hiding here yet."

We proceeded into the boarding-house to make inquiries of the landlady, and we soon ascertained that one of her female guests had not appeared during all the excitement, and that she could not be found in her room.

The missing person was an old lady who occupied a room on the same floor where Miss Cameron's apartment and my own were situated, and who professed to be a midwife.

She had taken the room a few days after I engaged board in the house, and she had told the landlady that she would be absent a good deal, waiting on her patients.

I felt certain that the pretended midwife was no other than Midge Vail; and when we entered her room we came across sufficient evidences of the fact in the disguises found in her trunk.

Entering the parlor, I addressed Miss Cameron, and inquired:

"Did you see Richard Winchester while you were a prisoner, Miss Cameron?"

"I saw no one but that horrid woman, Mr. Douglas. She served me my meals at regular intervals; and she always asserted that I would remain a prisoner until I signed the draft on father for five thousand pounds."

"I'll give five thousand pounds to have the wretch caught and punished," cried Mr. Cameron.

He sent his daughter to a quiet hotel, where our enemies would not be likely to locate her. Then I received a phone message from a railroad-detective friend of mine, that a party had boarded a train for Philadelphia answering the description of Midge Vail, Richard Winchester and Doctor Winchester. Tom, Mr. Cameron and I hastened *anon* to the depot, and met the officer.

"The train they are on just met with an accident," the detective informed us. "A message came in that it was derailed near Paterson. There's a relief-train going out.

You can travel on it if you wish to investigate the people I alluded to."

We thanked him, accepted, and were soon on our way. But when we reached the derailed train, a conductor informed us that the three people we sought had decamped toward an old house down the country road in a swamp. We started in pursuit at once, and meeting a couple of farmer-boys, asked them about the lone house we were heading for.

"It's supposed to be haunted," one of them informed us. "The building stands on an island in a swamp, and it is very difficult of access. The place is owned by old Doctor Winchester."

"If you'll guide us there, I'll give you five dollars," I suggested, delighted to learn who owned the house.

"All right, boss. Come along."

The farmers led us to the house by means of a devious path in the shrubbery.

As we drew near, I saw Midge looking at us from an upper window, as we charged into the house. But when we reached the room, she had vanished.

At that moment several pistol-shots came from somewhere in the ceiling overhead and extinguished our lantern.

"Get a light, Tom, so we can see where they are!" I exclaimed.

CHAPTER TEN

WE TAKE A PRISONER

IT seemed an age to me before a light was procured; and then we discovered that she had escaped by means of a trap.

On looking up to the ceiling, I could perceive that there was an opening there also, from whence her friends had fired down to put out the light.

"Quick," I said, as I drew my weapon and made for the door. "They must not escape us. There's no use in hunting around this house, for I suppose it is full of hiding-places and trap-doors. We will go outside, all of us, and guard the place."

Tom Grant and the others were out with me very soon; and we had barely gained the yard in front, when a light wagon drove in from the road. I readily recognized the person in the wagon. It was old Dr. Winchester.

The old man was very much surprised on seeing us, and more especially when I approached him, saying:

"You are a prisoner, Doctor. We are here after your son and his confederates."

"My son?" grumbled the old doctor, as he sprang out of the wagon and stared at us. "What do you want Richard for now?"

"For kidnapping, sir," I cried. "And we arrest you as his accomplice. Do you not own this island and that old house there?"

"I don't own anything," growled the old doctor, who was staring at old Mr. Cameron. "Good heavens! who is that?"

"My name is Cameron, sir; and I came from Scotland," replied Mr. Cameron. "Your voice is very familiar to me."

"What brought you here? What are you after?" cried the old doctor, as he started back, like one in affright.

"There is some mystery here," I thought to myself, as I seized the old doctor. "We must frighten this old fellow into betraying the others."

Old Mr. Cameron was staring at the doctor in turn, as he replied:

"I was brought here, against my will, by your son and some of his friends. Who are you? Where have I met you?"

"I won't answer you," cried the old doctor, who was trying to shrink back.

"You must answer me," cried the old Scotchman, as he sprang forward, and pulled the glasses from the eyes of the doctor.

I perceived, while I held the old fellow, that he also wore a false covering on his face, as well as a wig.

Having clapped a pair of bracelets on his wrists, I easily managed to draw them away from his head, and fling them on the ground.

Then he stood revealed before us, a man of fifty years of age, with marked, peculiar features, that showed his Celtic origin.

"Great heavens!" gasped old Cameron, as he stared at the man in astonishment. "It is my brother Donald!"

"Yes, James Cameron," replied the man, "I am your brother. What do you want?"

"Ah, Donald—Donald," cried old Mr. Cameron, "you were always a bad creature. You robbed me long ago, and——"

"That is an old story now, James," cried the detected man; "and I suffered for it. Why do you come here to plague me, after so many years?"

"Because your son and the woman who lived with him kidnapped him, sir," I cried. "They are in there now, and we are going to take them, dead or alive."

I had taken the precaution to keep the two young farmers around the house, in order to guard against the escape of those inside.

We had also secured the door leading from the dark passage.

"My son and the woman he lives with," repeated the prisoner.

"He means the young woman known as Midge Vail, sir," I cried.

"Why, Mrs. Vail is my daughter," cried the detected man in surprise. "What has she done to you, James Cameron?"

"Enough, in all conscience," cried old Cameron. "Oh, Donald, did you not do me injury enough long ago, without troubling me again?"

"I didn't trouble you again, James," replied the brother. "I had my revenge once, and that was enough for me. You robbed me——"

"That is not the truth, Donald," cried old Cameron. "I did not rob you. I gave you what our father left you, and you squandered it. And then you turned my enemy because I would not give you more. At the dead of the night you stole to my farm-house in Scotland, with a band of your vile associates."

"And burned the house to the ground," cried the detected man defiantly. "You swore to that on my trial, James, when I was innocent."

"You were not innocent," cried old James Cameron in indignant tones. "I knew your voice, though your face was blackened. Why shouldn't I swear against you, after my wife and infant daughter perished in the flames?"

"That is an old story, and I paid the penalty, if I was guilty," replied Donald. "Now, what do you want with me?"

A light was breaking in on my mind at the moment, and an idea was suggested to me by the words of old James Cameron.

Turning suddenly on my prisoner, I demanded, in as stern tones as I could assume:

"What did you do with the infant child you stole from the burning building that night?"

The man turned on me like a tiger, as he cried:

"What do I know about a child? I say I was not there at all."

"That is a lie!" I cried. "I can see the guilty look on your face. Mr. Cameron's child was saved that night, and you know what became of the little girl after. She grew up to womanhood. She was since brutally murdered by your daughter, whom you call Mrs. Vail."

"That is a lie!" yelled the detected man, thrown off his guard by my bold assertion. "My daughter loved the girl like a——"

The man paused, and I saw that he was looking up at a window of the house.

Turning my eyes in the direction on the instant, I saw Midge Vail standing at the window, holding up her hand in a warning manner.

The bold woman disappeared the moment after, and before I could take aim at her.

When I turned again to my prisoner, there was a sullen look on his countenance, as if he had made up his mind to say no more.

Old James Cameron was fearfully agitated on discovering his wicked brother, and he could not keep his eyes off the man, as he continued to ask him many questions.

"Is it possible," he cried, "that my daughter was saved that night?"

"I don't know anything about the business," growled his brother.

"You do, James," said the other. "Tell me where my child is, and I will forgive you."

"I don't want your forgiveness, Donald," replied the other. "You were always a harsh, unnatural brother to me. If your girl was alive to-day, and I knew where she was, I wouldn't tell you."

"There's no need of telling," I said, "for we know all about it. Your daughter—if Midge Vail is your daughter—murdered the young girl."

"I tell you my daughter did not murder her," roared the man in angry tones. "Midge loved her as she loved——"

He paused again, and his eye was on the window. Before I could turn about, two shots came from the house.

Old James Cameron clapped his hand to his breast, and fell to the ground, crying:

"I am shot."

I fired my revolver at the window, and a cry of pain told me that my shot had its effect.

Growing desperate at the situation, and feeling that we were somewhat at the mercy of those in the house, I seized my prisoner again, and pushed him before me, so as to guard my body as I advanced to the building, crying:

"I will blow your brains out if there's another shot fired from that house, and if those inside don't surrender at once. Tom Grant, get behind me. Get to shelter, my friends."

"We surrender," cried a faint voice from the window. "Don't murder my father. Douglas, you have conquered. I am wounded."

"My daughter; my dear girl!" yelled the prisoner, as I pushed him on. "Oh, if you are not a brute altogether, let us go to her aid."

"Come on," I said. "But remember, that you are a dead man on the least sign of treachery. Let us go in, my friends."

The two young farmers entered the house with us, leaving Tom Grant with the unfortunate old gentleman, who was groaning in agony.

On pushing upstairs to the room from whence the shots came, we found Midge Vail stretched near the window, suffering from a wound.

Richard Winchester was lying on a sofa near her, and he was severely wounded also.

"'Tis all up, father," said the woman, with a groan. "We have played the game out, and we have lost."

"Where is Hector Maxwell?" I cried, as I glanced around the room.

"He is safe," replied Midge. "One of us, at least, will escape. There's no use, father. You cannot do anything for me."

"But you must not die, Midge," cried my prisoner, as he bent an imploring look on me. "Oh, take off the handcuffs, and let me tend to her. I am a surgeon, you know."

"To be sure," I replied, as I unlocked the bracelets. "You cannot escape us now."

"My son and my daughter lying wounded before me," groaned the unfortunate man, as he proceeded to examine Midge's wound with trembling hands.

"What's the difference, father?" said Midge, with a sickly smile. "Is the old wretch outside there dead?"

"You mean your uncle, Midge?"

"Yes; my dear uncle, who robbed you and sent you to prison," replied Midge. "Ah, Sandy, were it not for you, I would have made that old fellow suffer. I would have drained him of every dollar he was worth, and made a beggar of him, for my father's sake."

"Then you knew all along that Mr. Cameron was your uncle, and that Annie was your cousin?" I asked.

"To be sure," replied Midge. "I went over to Europe especially to go for them. I worked the game well—did I not?"

The wicked creature must have been suffering tortures, yet she smiled up at me as she asked the question.

"It was cruel work," I remarked.

"You don't know anything about it," she retorted in petulant tones. "You don't know anything about what father here suffered from his brother."

"Then it was all a game of revenge," I remarked, as I was anxious to get at the secret of the mysterious head.

"Revenge and profit, Sandy," replied Midge, with a grim smile.

"Don't talk any more, Midge," said her father, "and you may do very well, my dear girl. Now, I will see to Richard."

"I am past seeing to," moaned the young man on the sofa. "Do all you can for Midge, father, and leave me alone."

"You are not dying, Richard?" inquired Midge, in soft, tender tones, such as I had never heard from her lips before.

"Yes, sister, I fear I am dying," replied the young man in faint tones. "I hope you'll be all right."

"I hope so," muttered Midge. "But I don't care much how it goes, if you are gone. Ah, Sandy, you spoiled a splendid game."

"Won't you tell me about the head?" I asked.

"The head! Well, you would never suspect how that became an important feature in our plot. I don't care if I do make a full confession to you; and I'll do it on one condition."

"What is that?" I asked.

"Promise me to be very light on father. He had little or nothing to do with our work."

"I promise that," I replied. "You don't plead for Hector Maxwell, I see."

"The coward!" she exclaimed. "No; I hope you will catch him and string him up. I will speak, father, and I am pleading for you. Give me a glass of wine, father. Draw a chair here, Sandy. I want to be friends with you at least."

We had placed the suffering woman on a bed in the room where she had fallen; and now drew a chair to her side, to listen to the clearing-up of the secret of the mysterious head.

Before she could commence her story, Tom Grant entered the room with a clouded face, saying:

"Old Mr. Cameron is dead, Sandy."

"I am glad of it," said Midge, in a voice of triumph; "and you are avenged, father."

"I am sorry he's dead," said her father. "He was a very harsh brother to me; but he was a brother for all that."

"He was a cruel wretch," said Midge. "Father, you were always too easy. Now listen to me, Sandy. Tom Grant, draw a chair this way."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

MIDGE VAIL'S CONFESSION

THE sun was streaking in through the windows of the room when Midge Vail commenced her story.

"The first thing I remember," she said, "was playing with a little girl who was about three years younger than myself, and with my brother there, who is about two years older. We were living with my mother, who was a Scotch woman, in a large manufacturing town in the north of England.

"We were very poor, and my mother found it very hard to get along. When I was old enough to ask for my father, my mother told me that he had got into trouble in Scotland, and that he was sent across the seas to a place called Botany Bay.

"After being some time in England, my mother received a letter from New York. My father had escaped from the penal settlement, and he was working in a drug-store in New York City. He sent mother money, and we all came here to America. On the voyage out my poor mother died. If she had lived, I believe I might have been a good woman.

"When I saw my father in New York, he was a sad-looking man, who appeared to be suffering from some great mental trouble. When I was old enough to hear the truth, he told me that his brother in Scotland had robbed him, and then sent him off to the penal settlement. From that moment I was fearfully embittered against my uncle in Scotland.

"I was almost grown to womanhood before I knew that Maggie was not my sister—that she was only my cousin. My father told me about his stealing her from the farm-house of his brother on the night of the fire. Maggie Duncan, as she was called, was Annie Cameron's twin sister; and I never saw two people who looked more alike in life or death."

"How could you have the heart to kill her?" I asked.

"She was not killed. That is, it was not intended to kill Maggie," replied Midge, with a sigh. "Her death was a sheer accident. But you let me tell my story while I have strength."

"I would rest, if I were you, Midge," said her father.

"I cannot rest until I have explained everything; and then I will take a long rest," said Midge. "Well, Sandy, I was a very young woman when I met a man who became my husband. My father was then playing doctor in New York, but he was not doing very well. Vail, my husband, was a riding-master in a circus.

"I soon found out that my husband was a cruel, selfish dog, and that he had married me to make money out of me. He soon trained me to be a daring bareback-rider, and he also induced me to get Maggie into the profession. One day, out in Chicago, he struck me with his whip before all the company. I picked up the first thing at hand, flung it at him, and injured him. He died.

"Maggie and I remained with the company for some time, until she got an engagement in Cincinnati in a theater there.

"I came on to New York, where I found my father engaged in the patent-medicine business, but not making his fortune. I found that my poor brother there was a wild, reckless fellow, but I was attached to him and he was to me.

"Traveling did not improve my morals any, and I soon became an adventuress. My brother made his living by gambling.

"About that time I conceived the idea of going over to Scotland, to see if I could not work out a plot of vengeance against my uncle, who had, as I learned, become a very rich man. Richard, there, joined me when I made the proposal. At the same time, I wrote to Maggie, and asked her to follow us to Europe, where I thought she would get a good engagement, as she was very pretty and very clever.

"Richard and I got to Edinburgh, and when we inquired for our uncle, we found that he had gone to live in London. And so we followed him there. In the meantime, I received a letter from Maggie, telling us that she would join us.

"Richard soon made acquaintances in London—some good and some bad. Among others whom he brought to the house was George Graham and Miles Murphy. Although George Graham was a weak-minded kind of a fellow, I soon took a great liking to him, and when I heard that he was engaged to my cousin, Annie Cameron, I hated the girl.

"I saw her once on the street, and I was struck with the remarkable likeness to Maggie, although I knew they were twin-sisters.

"About that time we became acquainted with Hector Maxwell also, who proved to be an adventurer, like ourselves, and who was in love with Annie Cameron. Among our other speculations and plots, we formed a combination against George Graham.

"I wanted to make the weak-minded fellow my husband. Hector Maxwell and Richard went in for robbing him. While we were plotting against him, Maggie Duncan, as she was called, arrived in London, and Hector Maxwell was surprised at her remarkable likeness to Annie Cameron.

"Hector Maxwell stopped at our house at the time, and he was engaged in inventing and completing a machine for cutting paper, on which he hoped to make his fortune.

"The machine was in the garret of the house we lived in, and it was all ready for use and exhibition on the night Maggie Duncan came to London. Now, Sandy, you will soon see, bad as we are, that we did not intend to kill the dear, sweet little creature.

"While at supper that evening allusion was made to the cutting-machine; and it was proposed that we should go up

and inspect it. We all four proceeded to the garret, and Hector Maxwell commenced to describe it.

"'What a wonderful machine!" said Maggie, in a playful manner. 'It would make a splendid guillotine for the French. I wonder how I would look in a drama, playing Charlotte Corday, for instance, with my head in that machine?'

"'Try how you would look,' said Hector Maxwell. 'There is no danger while I hold the crank.'

"Maggie placed her head under the great knife, and looked out at us with a smiling face, as she cried:

"'*Vive la liberty!* Death to all tyrants!'

"At that moment the crank slipped in some way, and cries of horror burst from us all when poor Maggie's head fell out on the floor. I fainted on the instant; and I could not tell what happened for some time after.

"When I recovered, I found that my brother and Hector had made way with the body of my unfortunate cousin; but they had kept the head, which Hector had preserved in such a natural state, as you know.

"I couldn't tell now who first proposed the idea of sending the head to George Graham on the night that he gave the supper; but I think it was Hector Maxwell. At any rate, the object was to get George out of his mind a little, so that we could get him in our power. Dressed as a boy, I delivered it.

"We succeeded, as you know. When the weak-minded young man called on us again, I found that I could do what I pleased with him. On the very night that you followed us to his house he made me his lawful wife. We had secured a large portion of his property at the same time. You know all about what has passed since, Sandy Douglas."

"And that is the secret of the mysterious head?" I said.

"That is the secret of the mysterious head," answered Midge. "When I took George Graham away from London, I purposely gave out that we were going to America, as I felt sure that my uncle and his daughter would follow him. If it were not for you, Sandy Douglas, I would have left the old miser as poor as he left my father there."

"Where is Hector Maxwell hiding?" I asked.

"I won't tell you, Sandy," replied Midge. "He is a coward, but I'll not betray him. My father hired this farm last spring; and he fitted it up for a certain purpose. That accounts for these traps in it. If we were not so badly wounded, you would never take us prisoners."

"Richard is dead, Midge," said her father in sorrowful tones.

"I shall soon be after him," groaned the wounded woman, in feeble tones; "let me sleep now, Sandy, and I don't think I'll ever wake again."

The wicked woman spoke the truth.

She was dead at nine o'clock that morning.

As I could not prove anything against her father, I did not take any steps against him. We returned to the farm-house, where we found George Graham very low.

After making arrangements with the officers, Tom Grant and I returned to New York, where I was compelled to break to Annie the sad intelligence of her father's death.

Then we started out to look for Hector Maxwell, as I considered him the greatest scoundrel of them all. Moreover, I had learned from old Dr. Winchester that Hector had secured the greater portion of the money taken from George Graham. I hunted for the rascal for a full week, and I could not find any trace of him.

In the meantime, old Mr. Cameron was buried, while Midge and her brother found a resting-place in the corner of the garden at the farm-house.

When George Graham had recovered from his wound, it was found that he was a helpless and a harmless lunatic. As the doctors declared that he would never recover his reason again, Annie decided to take him back to his home in Scotland; and I agreed to accompany them.

When we reached Scotland, we learned that Annie was a beggar. The bank in which her father had invested all his money had suspended payment. The young girl bore her new trials with great fortitude, and I did all I could to console her.

George Graham's relations took care of him until he died, which event took place about a year after his return to Scotland.

Annie Cameron refused the charitable offers of some of her rich friends, and she accepted a position as governess in a family, where she had been known in former years.

I returned to report at Scotland Yard, and the chief was pleased to compliment me on my work.

About six months after I returned to Europe, I was sent to Paris in pursuit of a runaway bank clerk, who had made off with a large amount of money. I succeeded in arresting my man, and I was strolling along the Boulevards one evening, when a couple ahead attracted my attention.

I recognized the lady to be Annie Cameron, and she was walking with a gentleman whose figure was somewhat familiar to me.

As I was well disguised at the time, I drew near the pair, not with any purpose of playing the spy, but out of sheer curiosity, for I was still deeply interested in Annie Cameron. When I got within hearing distance, I recognized the man's voice at once, though he was thoroughly disguised in his outward appearance.

"I beg you will never address me again, sir," said Annie. "I would not be your wife if you were rolling in wealth. Oh, if you only knew how I despise you."

"Have a care, Annie," replied the disguised man. "I am rich now, and wealth is power. You are only a poor governess, and I can crush you."

"I'll arrest you, you scoundrel!" I cried, as I caught the rascal's arms and clapped a pair of bracelets on his wrists. "I thought you would not escape me forever, Hector Maxwell."

The man was stupefied for some moments, and then he broke out at me in vengeful tones.

Handing him over to the French authorities, I proceeded to escort Annie to the house of the folks she was living with. That evening I asked the dear girl to be my wife, and she consented.

She tells me now, when children have grown up around us, that she has never regretted being the wife of a Scotland Yard detective.

I took Hector Maxwell back to London, where he was tried for fraud and conspiracy, and he received twenty years' penal servitude.

I have remained on the force ever since, and while I have gained some fame in my profession, I have not acquired wealth.

However, I am happy in the possession of a good wife; and I, for one, will never forget the first night I saw her, when her old lover was frightened to madness by the present of the mysterious head.

Send us your name, address and age on a postal card and we will mail you a sample copy free of a most interesting magazine.

THE GLASS WITNESS

BY J. T. BROUGHAM

TOM GALE was the happiest youth in Brooklyn when his father handed him a photograph camera as a birthday present. There was a little pamphlet in the camera box which explained how to take portraits and landscape views which Tom studied very carefully, and, after a few days' practice, he mastered the art of making pictures and turned out some very fair work.

That was how he first launched out, and after a while there was not a nook of corner within the city, at the parks or in the suburbs where he was not encountered popping away at everything to be met with which offered to make a nice picture.

Early and late he would unexpectedly turn up in the most unlooked-for spots, never tiring of the sport, running all sorts of risks to gain an extra good view, and gaining the name of a fiend of the camera for himself from those who most frequently encountered him.

Now, throughout all his experience it never once occurred to Tom that it was necessary to have a permit to use his camera in Prospect Park until an incident occurred that brought it to his mind.

He had just planted his tripod one sunny afternoon in the vicinity of the parade ground, to take a snap-shot at the corner of the lake, in which some swans were swimming, when out of the bushes came a policeman.

This particular officer had been watching Tom a long time past, and made up his sagacious mind that he did not have a permit, so he now resolved to find out the truth of the matter.

"See here, young feller," said he, approaching, "have you got a license to take pictures in this park?"

"No," replied Tom with a start and a changing color as his fingers involuntarily closed over the tripod of his camera.

"I thought not," said the officer in satisfied tones. "I'll have to arrest——"

But before he had fairly begun speaking Tom snatched up his camera and away he ran like a streak, with horrible visions of prison staring him in the face to lend speed to his legs.

The policeman was very fat, and of course could not run so swiftly as Tom, thereby giving him a great advantage.

He soon left the panting and puffing officer far in the rear, and, dodging in toward the lake as he saw another policeman ahead, he glided toward an open rustic summer-house on the water's edge.

It looked like a good place to hide in until the two policemen went away, but as he drew near it he saw two men inside who were standing with their backs turned toward him, earnestly talking.

Fearful lest they might betray him, Tom glided into the dense bushes without making any noise and laid down in the shadow, his heart thumping like a trip-hammer and his breath nearly gone.

After a while he recovered and as no sign of the officers was seen he began to regain courage and packed up his camera.

While so engaged he peeped out at the two men in the rustic house and saw that they were now seated with their faces turned toward him.

Both were dressed plainly, and one was older than the other.

The youngest had a smooth face and was about thirty years old, while the other was evidently ten years older. Although he wore no mustache or beard he had side-whiskers as dark as his hair.

The hidden watcher would not have paid much attention to the two men had it not been for the singular fact that one was blind in the right eye, the loss of his optic being remedied by wearing a staring glass eye.

As he noticed this deformity he also saw that the two men were very angry at each other; and as their voices arose to a pitch of fury he heard the eldest man exclaim:

"Jasper Stafford, although you are my step-brother, you must pay your gambling debts to me as if I were a stranger. I hold your note for five hundred dollars which you lost to me in Murphy's poker-room, and as I am hard pressed for funds I want you to pay up. Refuse and I swear that I will take the note to your father, expose you and sue you for the amount."

"See here, Priestly," cried the young man hoarsely as he sprang up with pale cheeks and flashing eyes, "would you be guilty of such meanness as that? Would you disgrace me, knowing as you know how my father detests all vices and believes I am an exemplary man, studying, as I am, for the ministry?"

"I am desperate," replied Priestly in unmoved tones. "I must have money. I shall not hesitate over the means I take to get it."

"But I tell you again I have not got it, and I implore you to wait until I can borrow it from father," said Stafford. "He is a rich man, but I have recently borrowed so much he may question me, and I cannot lie to him. Have mercy, Roger, and do not forget that I never did a wrong act in my life until you brought me to that gambling-house and induced me to play for money. Then the fatal fascination for cards overwhelmed me."

"I have debts of my own to meet," inexorably replied Priestly. "You have until Saturday to get the money. I will meet you anywhere you like, but if you do not produce the money I will expose you—that's all."

The young man fairly groaned in agony of spirit and strode from the rustic house, followed by the other, who had an evil smile of sarcasm upon his face.

It was only a chapter of an incident that was to affect Gale's life, and when the two men vanished he left his covert and went over the fence of the park, making his escape without the policeman seeing him. Then he hurried home.

One of his neighbors owned a catboat which was kept in Jamaica Bay, and when Saturday afternoon came Tom went down to the shore to take a sail with his friend.

There were some pretty views to be secured there, so Tom carried his camera, lunch and fishing-tackle, assured of having a fine day's sport.

Unfortunately, though, the prospect of taking pictures

became a matter of doubt, as the sky clouded over and the weather remained rain-threatening all the afternoon.

While Tom's friend went out to the catboat in a skiff to shake out the furl of the sail and get up the anchor Tom strolled off with his camera to get a water view before the sky became any darker.

He saw a float moored amid the reeds at an isolated spot opposite the old steamboat channel that ran from Canarsie, and planted his tripod in the reeds back of it.

From there he had a magnificent view of the bay down as far as Rockaway Bar. The foreground, an old, abandoned float, would break the monotony of the water scene and lend attractiveness to the scene.

Having gained a good focus, he swung open the ground-glass, slipped his plate-holder in the notches and drew out the slide.

He then grasped the cap, pulled it off the lens and counted.

The gloomy weather necessitated a longer exposure than usual, and when he had timed it correctly by his watch he capped the lens, shoved in the slide over the plate, and was just in the act of taking out the holder when he heard a loud noise.

Glancing up hastily he saw the crouching figure of a man go rushing through the tall reeds and disappear behind an old boathouse a short distance away.

Tom was mystified over the fellow's strange actions.

Then he swept a keen glance around and observed something which he had not noticed before. It was the drenched body of a man lying upon the float.

But it had not been there before, he was positive, when he had first casually noticed the float as being a good adjunct to the picture he had just taken.

With his curiosity aroused over the matter Tom made his way toward the float, when, upon coming to the trail made by the man who ran away through the tall grass, he saw a gold watch and chain lying in the mud, and picked them up.

Considering himself lucky over the find, he continued on to the float, and, reaching the prostrate man, he bent over him, peered in his face, and then started up with a terrified cry.

"The man is dead!" was Tom's frantic ejaculation.

And he told the truth.

The body was drenched, as if it had just come out of the water, and the boy made the startling discovery that the man was the youngest of the two—Jasper Stafford—whom he had heard quarreling with Roger Priestly in the Prospect Park rustic house!

It occupied several moments for Tom to recover from the shock, and he was just about to hurry away from the spot when he heard a footstep behind him, and, turning around, he beheld a newcomer.

He looked like a plain citizen, but it happened that he was a detective, and he said apologetically:

"Was just passing, saw this fellow and came to see what the trouble was. Fall overboard? Friend of yours? What are you doing with that handsome watch in your hand?"

Before Tom could reply the man peered at the recumbent form quite sharply, and then burst out with:

"Jerusalem! The man is dead! There are finger marks on his throat, as if he'd been strangled. Then he's been immersed, too. And his watch-chain has been ripped out of his vest button-hole! See here, is that your watch?"

"No!" tremblingly replied Tom, turning pale.

"Did you murder this man?"

"No, sir."

"Who is he?"

"I don't know."

"How did this happen?"

"I'm sure I can't tell you, sir."

"Humph! Very likely. This is a murder. You are my prisoner."

"Oh, Lord!" gasped Tom with a fearful shiver as he glanced around to see which way he could run.

But the man divined his intention and seized the frightened boy, called his attention to the fact that the dead man's pockets were all rifled and turned inside-out, and marched Tom away.

What happened after that Tom's scared and confused mind could hardly recollect, but he remembered stoutly asserting his innocence of theft or murder, and the next thing he knew he was out of a dense crowd, on a train, in a taxi, off to a station-house in Brooklyn, and finally locked in a cell.

Then the full horror of his position dawned upon him.

The frightened youth who owned the catboat, and who had come ashore while Tom was in the custody of the detective, went to Tom's house and told his parents what had happened, and they, wild and anxious, came to the station.

Monday morning Tom was unceremoniously packed in a prison van with a rough lot of vagabonds, drunkards and criminals, driven to court and there held to answer to a charge of murder and robbery.

The local justice thereupon indicted him without bail to await trial by the Grand Jury, and he was again carted away in a van and put in Raymond Street Jail.

It all seemed like some hideous dream.

That afternoon the detective who caused his arrest called and closely questioned him, when Tom explained how it happened that he came to be near the float, how he saw the man stealing away, how he found the watch and how he then not only discovered the dead man, but saw that he was a person whom he had met before under peculiar circumstances. The detective wanted to know what Tom referred to.

Thereupon he related what he had witnessed in Prospect Park passing between Priestly and Stafford. Tom's story put the detective in a brown study.

A few more questions passed and then he went away without saying a word and hunted up Roger Priestly.

He found that gentleman at home, in a fashionable house on a stylish street, and, being ushered into the parlor, he asked:

"Where were you on Saturday afternoon?"

"In New York," promptly replied Priestly.

"Can you prove it?"

"Of course I can."

"Then do so, for your life depends upon an alibi."

Priestly looked startled and questioned the detective, whereupon the man told him that Stafford was murdered and that suspicion rested upon him (Priestly).

The man brought the detective to New York and proved by a friend that he had been in his company all day Saturday. Such evidence seemed to exonerate Priestly and satisfy the officer, but he made up his mind to carefully watch the man. His efforts were rewarded. On the following night he shadowed Priestly to a gambling den in New York and saw him enter the proprietor's private office. It opened on the hall and the detective listened outside the door.

"I have come to pay you the five hundred I owe," he heard Priestly say. "Here is a note signed by my step-brother covering the amount."

"Thank you. I see by the date you have had it since Saturday."

"Yes, he made it out on Saturday and gave it to me."

"But I read in the newspapers that he was drowned or killed on that day, and that a chap is under arrest for the crime, as it looks as if he killed Stafford to rob him of his watch and chain."

"He gave me the note before going down there."

"But now he is dead, who will pay it?"

"My step-father—it is drawn against him. Just state that it was a gambling debt, and to hush up the disgrace on his dead son's name he won't hesitate long about paying up."

"All right—I'll try it. But if he refuses, what then?"

"I will make the amount good."

"That note," muttered the detective as he glided away unseen, "is a forgery. Stafford's father said his son hadn't been home since Thursday, when I asked him to-day. Poor old man! He don't know that his son is dead—his wife has kept the shocking news from him well. Moreover, by inquiring at the theological school Stafford attended I learned that he did not leave the institution until Saturday afternoon to go, as he said, and keep an engagement. Consequently Priestly is lying. But if he really killed his step-brother how can I prove that he was in Stafford's company on Saturday afternoon at Canarsie, since he has proved an alibi?"

The detective began to imagine that Tom Gale was innocent, and that Priestly knew more about Stafford's death than he would confess.

With this impression on his mind and a new idea with it he returned to Tom's prison with the camera and said:

"See here, wasn't you photographing the spot where the crime was committed a moment before you saw Stafford lying on the float?"

"Yes, I took a picture," assented Tom anxiously.

"And the negative is yet in the plate-holder?"

"Certainly, sir, unless some one took it out.

"No one touched it. Now, can you develop the plate?"

"Very easily."

"Do so."

"But I'll have to have my chemicals, water, and so on."

"Name what you want and I'll get the things at once."

Tom enumerated all the things he needed and within half an hour the detective came back with them and was locked in the cell with the prisoner.

It was darkened, a ruby light was lit and then Tom took the plate out of the holder, and, keenly watched by the lynx-eyed detective, in the deep gloom of the cell he developed the plate.

Gradually the back glass began to show the outlines of the picture, until at last it stood out in bold relief and got a washing.

Then Tom held it up before the ruby light, and both he and the detective uttered a cry of amazement.

The scene on the plate showed a lowering sky over the placid waters of the bay, while kneeling on the float was Roger Priestly, dripping wet, pulling the body of Jasper Stafford out of the water!

Priestly was the man who would have to account for the crime, for the silent witness on the photographic plate was bound to convict him.

The detective took the things out of Tom's cell and with the precious plate in his hands he hurried away.

That night he met Priestly in his house again, and, snapping a pair of handcuffs on his wrists, the detective exclaimed:

"I arrest you for the murder of your step-brother, Priestly!"

"Eh? What!" gasped the startled man, turning pale.

"Look at this evidence of your guilt!" said the officer. He held the negative up to the light.

But one glance Priestly cast upon it, and uttering a moan he fainted.

When he recovered consciousness he was in prison. Then he weakened and confessed all to the detective.

He had met Stafford at Canarsie.

His friend in New York perjured himself to save him by a false alibi.

Stafford and he walked over to the float for privacy, when he repeated his demand for the $500 his step-brother owed him and was refused.

They quarreled bitterly, came to blows and ended in a struggle.

When they fell in the water Priestly had Stafford clutched by the throat and when he found that Stafford was drowned he got up on the float and pulled his body out of the water.

Rifling Stafford's pockets and stealing his watch to make the deed look like the result of a robbery, he fled, but dropped the watch and chain by accident.

It was his crouching body Tom had seen, and it was the lost watch which he had found.

Then the detective showed him the forged note, which he had procured from the keeper of the gambling-house.

Priestly admitted that he had made it out himself, assured that the deception would not be exposed and confident that his step-father would honor it, imagining Stafford made it out.

All the detective learned was enough to exonerate Tom, and, when the man was tried and found guilty, Tom was honorably discharged, saved by his camera.

Exposed, dishonored and sentenced to death, the wretched man one night remorsefully committed suicide in his cell before the penalty of the law could be dealt.

It was a long time before Tom recovered from the effect of what he had passed through. As a result, now that his camera had done him such a good service, he became more infatuated with it than ever, and he is again in his old haunts, popping away at anything and everything that suits his fancy.

We particularly call your attention to the story to be issued in our next number, entitled "An Embezzler's Daughter," by Martha Hatfield Price. A better detective story never before has been published.

A UNIFORM TYPE FOR THE BLIND

AMERICAN libraries for the blind are rejoicing over the fact that they will no longer be obliged to have books in five different kinds of raised letters in order to accommodate readers taught in different parts of the country and at different periods. After many years of discussion, a uniform type, to be known as "revised Braille," has been agreed upon, and hereafter all books embossed in this country are to be in the new type. "The Deserter," by Richard Harding Davis, was the first book to be published in revised Braille.

RUN DOWN

By POLICE-CAPTAIN HILL

TOWARD the close of a warm June day the piazza of the Empire Hotel was thronged with guests in the small town of Harrisburg, Ohio, when a large, fiery black horse came dashing down the street toward the hostelry with a young man upon its back. It was a ferocious beast, and was evidently running away with its daring rider, and the excited people hastily arose and leaned over the piazza railing to get a better view of it.

"Why, it's Jim Oliver, the commercial drummer, who registered here from Washington yesterday!" exclaimed the hotel-keeper. "He took a fancy to that ugly beast yesterday, and bought him from one of my guests, named Dick McEvoy, who recently brought the creature from Columbus with several more to sell. It was the last of the lot he disposed of."

"It's a regular terror," remarked a tall, fine-looking man in a stylish suit and silk hat, who had arrived that day, registering as Ralph Ranger, of New York.

"You are right. Not one man in a thousand can ride it."

"I'd like to bet a thousand dollars that I can not only ride the beast, but make it obey me like a dog," confidently answered Mr. Ranger, his jet-black eyes snapping as he twirled the end of his dark mustache.

"Jim Oliver may take you up on that bet, as he seems to be a sort of sporting-man," replied the hotel-keeper, with a smile.

Just then the foam-flecked horse came flying up to the hotel, and by a tremendous effort its rider reined it in, fairly throwing it upon its haunches in order to bring it to a standstill.

"Bravo!" shouted several of the guests upon seeing the plucky rider gain the mastery of his nervous steed.

Jim Oliver was a middle-sized young man, with a smooth, pleasant face, dancing blue eyes, and wore fastidious clothing. He seemed to have plenty of money, but evidently did but little business in Harrisburg, it was such a small place.

As a stable-boy came up, and took the horse by the bridle, the young man dismounted, smiling.

"It's a mettlesome beast," he remarked to the hotel-keeper, who went down the steps to meet him, accompanied by Ralph Ranger, "and I'll bet big money that there isn't a man in this town can ride him any better than I can. It was a tough pull, I can tell you."

"Mr. Ranger does not seem to agree with you," laughed the hotel-keeper.

Jim pulled out his wallet, and produced a large roll of bills.

"Name the amount for which you wish to back any one, Mr. Ranger," said he quietly, "and I will gladly cover it up to five thousand dollars."

"I am not much of a betting man, sir," replied Ranger, as he extracted a one-thousand-dollar bill from a big wad he carried, "but if I can't manage that horse better than you did, I'll forfeit this bill."

"Done!" replied the drummer immediately. "Find a stakeholder, and the people on this piazza shall witness the performance. But I warn you beforehand, that I'm accounted an expert rider, and had more than I could attend to managing that beast."

"Here comes Dick McEvoy, the man from whom you bought the horse," said Ranger, as a short, stocky fellow appeared. "He will do to hold the stakes, I believe. And I am willing that the hotel guests shall see the trials, and act as judges. As for your warning, I feel perfectly competent to manage the horse, and while thanking you for giving me the tip, I shall not retract what I said."

"Hey there! Bring that horse back!" yelled the hotel-keeper to the boy who was leading it to the stable while they were talking.

The boy did so, the stakes were put in McEvoy's hands, and all the guests became interrested in the event.

Ralph Ranger critically sized up the big horse, then put a foot in the stirrup, grasped the bridle, and vaulted astride of the saddle with all the grace and ease of an experienced equestrian.

No sooner was he upon the animal's back, however, when it began to balk, plunge, and kick viciously, in an effort to dislodge its rider, and every one of the spectators became interested, and began to laugh heartily over Ranger's effort to keep his seat.

He finally induced it to go ahead, however, but it bolted, reared up, bucked, and acted so outrageously that every one conceded at once that thus far Jim Oliver had the best of the bargain.

Finally the beast changed its tactics, took a sudden start, and ran away with the speed of the wind, and presently vanished from the view of the spectators around a bend in the road, enveloped in a cloud of dust, with its rider clinging desperately to its mane.

"Oliver has won. There ain't any doubt of it. Pay him the money," some one shouted.

"Hold on, gentlemen," quietly replied the horse-owner. "Wait till he returns. You may be too hasty. He might subdue the horse and beat me yet."

The crowd waited impatiently. An hour passed by, and Ralph Ranger did not materialize. Then another hour went, and the people became uneasy, spoke of an accident, and proposed going in search of the New York man. Jim Oliver glanced around sharply.

"Where is Dick McEvoy?" he asked.

Nobody knew. He had vanished. And so had the money. Instantly a suspicion seized every one, and a search was made.

The stable-boy said that McEvoy had come sneaking out of the stable while every one was interested in Ralph Ranger's performance, had mounted his horse, and had ridden off like the wind by the back-way, going in the direction Ranger pursued. Clearly then it was a conspiracy between the two to rob Jim of his money and horse, and leave their board-bill unpaid. Every one glanced pityingly at Jim, but the young man laughed carelessly, and said in a matter-of-fact way:

"Don't you waste any sympathy on me, my friends. See here."

He exhibited the badge of a Secret Service detective.

"What!" gasped the hotel-keeper, who had been raving over the clever manner in which he had been duped. Aren't you a drummer?"

"No; of course not," replied Jim. "I came here on purpose to meet those two scoundrels, but I had not secured evidence when they played this trick upon me. Acting upon information that the pair are shoving the 'queer' for some Western gang of counterfeiters, and stealing horses in one town and selling them in the next, I was put on their trail to bring them to justice."

Every one was amazed.

"I spotted the two," continued the detective, "but as they kept apart, I was not quite sure that they were the men I wanted. Still I felt well convinced of the fact when I saw that the bill Ranger put in McEvoy's hands was a counterfeit of the kind I am tracking."

"But they stole your horse and the money you wagered."

"True. But I'll pursue them and recover the horse."

"But the money you put up——"

"Is no loss, for it was some of their own counterfeits."

Every one roared with laughter upon hearing this.

"I wanted to corral McEvoy with Ranger's counterfeits," the detective went on, "and thus secure dead-sure proof against them; but they were too smart for me on that deal, and I've got to chase them again. Every moment is precious now, so I'll pay my bill, buy a horse, and get upon their trail without delay."

"Do you think Ranger can manage the black horse?"

"Certainly he can. It must be his own beast. It's a trick-horse. He taught it to permit no one to ride it but himself, evidently, and thus managed to spring this game upon any other dupe with whom they could secure a bet, after McEvoy sold him the horse, after the manner in which I was taken in."

A more amazed crowd than the listeners never was seen before.

Jim settled his account, and having purchased a horse, he started off at once in pursuit of his prey. By dint of asking questions of every one he met along the road, he finally discovered, by the description he got, that Ranger and McEvoy had met some distance from Harrisburg, and were seen cantering along together, side by side, the big black horse as docile as a lamb, and both men laughing and talking in the liveliest manner imaginable.

By the time night had fallen, the detective was close upon the trail of the fugitives, and finally turned from the road into a path that led through the forest toward the head-waters of the D—— River, that emptied into a large lake in the middle of the woods.

Within half an hour, Jim came in sight of a glen, and seeing a campfire burning in the distance, reined in his horse, tethered it to a tree, and feeling to see if his revolver was in readiness for use in case of an emergency, he quietly crept ahead amid the dense undergrowth to reconnoiter the ground.

Upon reaching the margin of the glen, he saw Ranger and McEvoy cooking something over the fire, while at one side of the fire four horses were fastened, while on the other side two men, in the costumes of ranchmen, were bound to the trees.

"They have been at their dirty-work again!" muttered Jim grimly. "They must have run across these two cattlemen, pinioned them to the trees, and took their horses."

His surmise was right.

Alone, he feared he would be unable to capture the two miscreants, so he made up his mind to liberate the prisoners, enlist their help, and thus secure his prey. Accordingly, he crept up quietly behind the tree to which they were bound, and pausing there, he whispered softly:

"I say! I'll help you if you make no noise!"

The two men were startled by hearing this unexpected voice so close behind them, but the truth flashed across their minds, and one of them whispered in guarded tones:

"Who are you?"

"A police-officer. I'm after the thieves."

"Oh! This is lucky, as true's my name's Luke Barton."

"You are cattlemen, ain't you?"

"Sure," replied Luke. "They are hookin' our mounts."

Jim drew his knife and cut their bonds, remarking:

"As a fair return for this, help me to arrest them."

"We will," returned the other ranchman vehemently.

Just then Jim exposed his body, and the two thieves saw him. Springing to their feet, they began to haul out their pistols, when Jim cried:

"Go for them, boys!"

The two ranchmen were unarmed, but they were courageous fellows, and rushing toward the two crooks, they attacked them with bare hands.

Bang, bang, went two spiteful shots. One of the bullets struck Luke's companion, but the wound was not serious, and he knocked the pistol from McEvoy's hand. Disarmed, the horse-thief plunged among the trees, and ran for his life, with the two cattlemen after him. Jim then started for the stylish Ralph Ranger, and that gentleman made an effort to present the detective with a ball from his pistol. The weapon miss-fired, fortunately, and before he could try the same game again, Jim knocked it out of his hand.

Ranger then dashed away, with Jim after him, and reaching the shore of the lake, he found himself hemmed in by a dense growth of bushes upon either side. There was no alternative but to turn and face Jim, or plunge into the lake and attempt to escape by swimming. He chose the latter course, but the detective went in after him like a shot, never stopping even to throw off his jacket, for he knew that if once Ranger reached the opposite shore he could escape.

Jim was an expert swimmer, and upon seeing that Ranger was not, he calculated that he would catch him before he was half-way across the lake. A strange humming and gurgling sound in the water met the detective's ears, and he glanced around in surprise, wondering what the noise meant; when, to his surprise, he saw Ranger swim in a circle, and swim in a curve.

Following upon his track, the detective heard the noise grow louder as he approached nearer to the center of the lake. He was rapidly overhauling his enemy now, and was sure of a speedy victory, when suddenly he felt an impulse given to his body, and he was drawn along with a strange and strong current that was gyrating in a vast circle. At first he paid but little attention to it, never dreaming of danger, but when he felt himself being carried along at amazing velocity, he began to make an effort to get out of it. To his amazement, he found it impossible to do so.

He then cast a nervous glance toward the center of the spinning current, and a thrill of intense horror passed over him when he saw that there was a whirlpool in the middle of the lake, into the gurgling vortex of which he was being rapidly drawn! Then it dawned upon him that Ranger had discovered the perilous spot in time to keep out of the influence of its current, which caused him to swim around it. By so doing, the cunning rascal evidently designed to lure Jim into it, and thus get rid of him.

Exerting all his strength, the detective strove hard to get

away, but the circles kept gradually narrowing, until at last he found himself close to the center, and the vortex sucking his resistless body down into its funnel-shaped jaws!

"Help! Help!" he shouted.

Dull and dismal his voice sounded over the silent lake, with its belt of green woods, and he heard a mocking laugh peal from Ranger's lips, as he swam near by, out of the influence of the whirlpool, and cried:

"Yell, but it won't do you any good. There's no one near to aid you."

Jim shuddered, for at a distance of one hundred feet from the shore he saw that it would be impossible for any one to even reach him with a boat in time to save him from the whirlpool. A despairing groan escaped his lips.

But at that moment the two cattlemen came out of the woods, and he saw that Luke had a long lariat in his hand, which he had taken from the pommel of his saddle. He was the most expert lassoer in the State.

Having captured McEvoy and seen Jim's danger, he had come to make an effort to save the detective's life. Jim was within an inch of death.

"Save me!" he cried, despairingly.

The cattleman took the noosed end of his lasso, and several coils in his right hand, swung them around his head, and let them fly toward the detective. Jim had flung up his arms, and was just about to sink in the whirlpool, when the lasso uncoiled and the noose fell over one of his hands! He uttered a cry of joy, that was echoed by an exclamation of chagrin from Ranger.

"Pull away!" he shrieked, as the vortex sucked him under.

Luke and his companion hauled in on the line, and he came panting to the surface again, snatched from the very jaws of death. Within a few moments the cattlemen pulled him ashore, and Ranger made a spurt to get across the lake.

"It's well for you, as we was near!" said Luke grinning.

"We are quits now."

"So we are, pard. But that skunk is gettin' away."

"I'm afraid we'll lose him now."

"Not much. Just watch me hang him without a gallows."

He gathered in his lasso, coiling it up again with great rapidity, and sending the coils whistling around his head, he took his own kind of aim at Ranger's distant head, and let drive. With a whistling sound the rope shot out over the water, and true to its aim, the noosed end settled over Ranger's head! Instantly pulling it taut, the cattleman tightened it around the horse-thief's neck, almost strangling him.

Then they both began to haul away again, and despite his struggles, Ranger was helplessly pulled ashore.

"The victory is mine now!" exclaimed Jim triumphantly.

"You desarve it, stranger!" said the ranchman, as the two started to go.

"What! Are you going?"

"Yes. We've helped them fellers on their way to prison, an' we'll mount our nags, an' get back to our ranch, glad enough to have our lives, let alone our horses."

The detective thanked them for what they had done, and after they assisted him to strap the two prisoners to the backs of two of the horses, Jim bade them farewell. They rode away, laughing heartily over the adventure, and left Jim alone with his sulky prisoners.

"I won the bet, my friend," Jim said to Ranger, "for the guests of the Empire have all agreed that I rode the black horse much better than you did."

"Don't be sarcastic," growled Ranger bitterly. "I know you now."

"You do? That's queer—as queer as the money you handle."

"You are a government detective, ain't you?"

"Why, yes. Funny you couldn't see through it before."

"We found the money you bet to be counterfeit."

"Indeed. And now can you tell me where you make it?"

"No; we ain't giving ourselves away."

"Never mind. I'll discover. Your crooked horse-business is enough to convict you. At any rate, I need your company, so come with me."

He gaily mounted the black horse, which was docile enough now, and leading the other two, he rode back to Harrisburg with no further mishap.

Every one turned out to see Jim's triumphal return, not only with his black horse, but the two thieves as prisoners.

Clues were found in the possession of Ranger that led to the exposure of a dangerous gang of counterfeiters back in the interior of the State, and they were not only captured, but their mint was found and seized.

The astute officer convicted his prisoners, and they were all sentenced to long terms of imprisonment, while Jim himself received the praise of his chief and the thanks of the public for breaking up the dangerous gang, and stopping the horse-stealing.

Our readers will like the new story, "The Mysterious Forgery." It will be issued in the next number of this magazine, and was written by A Bank Detective.

WHY THEY CAN TALK

A WOMAN can talk longer than a man, says the San Francisco *Chronicle*, because she uses less force in speaking than the man does. A professor has proved by delicate measurements that the baritone singer uses far more energy than the tenor, and that the bass singer uses more force than either.

The difference between the force used by the contralto and the soprano singer is marked, and the contralto who sings in deep tones uses at least ten times the force of the thrilling soprano.

The explanation is so simple that it is surprising that the investigation was not made before. It has long been known that the tenor or soprano brings the vocal cords close together and keeps the edges only vibrating by the emission of air. The bass or contralto leaves the space between the cords wider open, and has to vibrate much more of the membranes, so that a considerably larger amount of air is required and much more force is expended.

Persons with high, squeaky voices often seem to be loquacious, and the reason is now plain—they can talk with far less effort than those who take a deeper tone and have to use more air to utter their words. Thus, a woman can out-talk a man because she has the advantage of using from one-seventh to one-sixteenth less lung-power in the effort.

OLD LADYWELL'S DIAMONDS

By D. BRANDON DOUGLAS

CHAPTER ONE

THE STORY OF THE ROBBERY

I WAS impatiently walking up and down my office, glancing up at a large clock, and now and then pausing before my desk to glance at an open letter thereon.

The clock hands pointed to a quarter-past twelve. The letter was an answer to one I had written making an appointment with Miss Ladywell, who had lost a number of valuable diamonds in a most mysterious manner. They had been to the office, when I was out, accompanied by a gentleman, and my chief, to satisfy the impetuousness of the younger sister, Lottie Ladywell, had sent down a plain-clothes-man to "look into the case." He fulfilled his orders to the letter, looked into the case which had held the diamonds, found it empty, and had so reported to the chief.

So he had sent for me; and I, having taken up the case, had written a letter, asking the Misses Ladywell to appoint some time to call upon me, and to be sure to call alone. I never liked having people who are not interested in the case let into my secrets.

"Past the time appointed," I muttered, as I walked up and down. "I wonder what women think men's time is worth? But then the daughters of the late Alderman Ladywell—one of the richest and most ignorant men in the city—are not likely to think of any one but themselves. Ah, here they come," I continued, as I heard an automobile draw up, and glancing out of the window, beheld a big limousine. I sat down at my desk, and appeared to be writing rapidly. A knock at the door was given.

"Come in," I called.

Enter a policeman, who told me two ladies wished to see me. I nodded, and the two ladies were admitted. The policeman handed them chairs, bowed, and retired, carefully closing the door behind him.

"Mr. Gerval, I presume?" said the elder lady—a woman of about thirty-five, rather thin, and certainly not handsome, for her mouth had a kind of lemon-like squeeze which did not speak of too amiable a temper.

"Of course he is, Almeria," said Lottie Ladywell—a pretty, bright-eyed girl, with an impudent, cocked-up nose and a saucy smile on her lips. "Of course he is, or do you think that when we asked for him we should have been shown in to see some one else?"

I saw at once the different natures of the sisters. The elder stood upon her dignity; the younger knew the power of wealth was but fleeting, and meant to enjoy it as much as she could.

"Lottie, do curb yourself!" said the elder sister sternly.

"Ladies," I cried, "I pray you pardon my interrupting this most amusing conversation, but in this office, ungallant as it may seem, we talk of nothing but business. Now, about those diamonds?"

"That's it—stick to the point—I like that!" cried Lottie. "Like everything else that is unpleasant, get it over at once and have done with it; and this business is far from pleasant."

"Lottie!" exclaimed the elder sister, screwing up her mouth in an awful shape; "and before a policeman, too."

Inwardly I determined to repay the lady for that part of her speech at some future time, for no policeman likes to be treated with contempt. However, I said blandly:

"To business, ladies, if you please. Time is precious, and I must warn you that every moment's delay renders it more unlikely that you will regain your property, and gives the thief a better chance of escape."

This seemed to bring them to order, and the story was told as follows:

The late Alderman Ladywell had no particular liking for literature; the financial articles in the *Times* being his only reading. Therefore, although he had a library, he never purchased books. Pictures he bought wholesale, and was not far out when he called them "daubs." But there was one thing which seemed to hold a fascination over the old gentleman, and that was a diamond.

Tell him that there was a big diamond to be seen anywhere, and off he would be to see it. Sometimes he would buy it; sometimes the price would be too high.

However, the alderman had gathered together diamonds to the value of some thousands of dollars. Why, nobody could tell; for he never wore jewelry of any kind, and the diamonds were placed away, unset as he had bought them, in a strong iron box, there to waste their luster. It may be that the alderman believed diamonds would rise in the market, and bought them on speculation. His daughters, at his death, came into all his property, and as they lived together, they determined that their father's favored jewels should not be touched. One morning the case was found broken open, and the diamonds gone.

Such was the story I drew from the ladies by cross-questioning and the usual means. Then followed the usual question:

"Do you suspect any one?"

"No," both sisters answered readily enough.

"The servants?"

"Have been in the family for years, and we have never missed a thing," replied Miss Lottie. "They have all known about the 'Ladywell diamonds,' as my poor father used to be proud to call them when he showed them to some of his friends. Besides, the way the strong-box was opened, shows that it was done by a man thoroughly up to the burglars' trade."

I looked at the young lady with surprise, for her language, although not that to be desired, led me to a clue. Did she know anything of the robbery? If so, I should have a very difficult game in hand.

"Have you any visitors?" I asked, watching the woman keenly.

"Only Mr. Von de Hardt, whom we met at Carlsbad; a man of great wealth and high family," said Miss Ladywell.

"Only Mr. Von de Hardt!" I mused aloud as I watched the two ladies, and noticed that they both turned very red. "What is he?"

"What is he? Surely you would not put a slur upon him! Why, he has mines, vineyards, and——"

"And gambling-tables," I suggested; for I had heard of a Von de Hardt who had kept such places.

"Gambling-tables!" screamed the elder sister, while the younger laughed aloud.

"To think of Heinrich keeping a gambling-table!" cried Lottie. "I wish he would. The only thing I do not like about him is he is so slow—no go to him. His soul is wrapped up in music, which I greatly admire; but I like a little dash in a man."

"Lottie," cried the elder one, "I am surprised at you! Sir, he is a man of the greatest honor."

"Well, ladies," said I, "you wish to regain these diamonds, and would do anything to effect that purpose?"

"We do; we would."

"Keep this matter secret—even from the German."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Lottie impatiently, as if I were insulting the man.

"Oh, don't be alarmed! It is not that I suspect him, but he might carelessly drop a word before one of the servants, and so it would put the thief on his guard. You see, in these cases we are bound to be cautious. Now I must give you a severe infliction."

"And what is that?"

"Why, you must invite me, under the name of Mr. John Tiverton, a friend of your father's, to spend a few days at your house. Do you understand?"

"I do," said Miss Lottie sharply. "He wants to spy into the whole household, and put the theft on some one, be they guilty or not."

"Thank you, miss. If that is your opinion of me, I shall refuse to take up the case. Good-morning."

"I do not mean that, Mr. Gerval. Let it be so, Almeria. I am sure this gentleman will be a great acquisition to our musical evenings. I don't know whether he is fond of music, but all men of talent must be, and Von de Hardt sings beautifully. At all events, he must come."

There was an eagerness about this lady I did not like; and had I not been a detective, I should have at once put her down as the thief. However, I accepted the invitation. The time was appointed, and much to my relief, the ladies departed.

Then I reviewed the case thus: The house had not been broken into. The diamonds were the only things gone. The servants were believed to be utterly trustworthy, and the only visitor was the German.

As this happened before the war, I cabled to the German police, and they sent me back the description of Von de Hardt, who, they said, was eccentric, and had suddenly started on his travels. I phoned the chief to send me a spotter.

Armed with the cable, I started for the mansion of the ladies. Of course I took care to be dressed well, and both women received me most cordially. We were standing on the hearth-rug in the drawing-room, the fire throwing a deep, rich glow around us, when the door opened, and a tall, dark, handsome man entered, and I was introduced to Mr. Von de Hardt!

CHAPTER TWO

DIAMONDS AND "DRY TOAST"

I FOUND the Teuton a very pleasant man. Unlike Germans in general. He was lively and witty; but one thing I noticed most particularly, and that was that he answered the description cabled by the German police.

We had a pleasant evening, and then retired to rest. The others to sleep, but not so with me. My business is not a pleasant one, for we detectives have to perform many acts which other men would shrink from. One of these acts, which even with us, is most disagreeable, is eavesdropping. But in some cases we cannot get on without it, and this happened to be one of the cases wherein secret listening was absolutely indispensable. Taking off my boots, I stole out of the room and listened at the doors, and, I must confess it, peeped through the keyholes.

All was well; no one even snored. Certainly if the thief was in that house he slept with an easy conscience. One door more to listen at; and that was the German's. I listened. He, like the others, was in bed and asleep, but his slumber was broken, and he groaned and muttered; but the only words I could catch were "Heinrich! my brother, why do you haunt me thus? The blow was a hasty one. I did not mean it. I——" And here followed a muttering which I could not make out.

"Another mystery," I thought, as I crept back to my rooms, "but no clue to the diamonds. However, I will send another telegraph-message to the German police to-morrow, and let them know where Von de Hardt is. It may be useful to them should his family grow restless on account of his sudden disappearance."

I turned into bed and fell asleep. The next day I was up early, dressed and out. Taking a taxicab, I rattled down to the office and sent off a cable to the German office. Then I returned at least an hour too early for breakfast, so I strolled into the library to read. Here I was joined by Von de Hardt.

"Ah, you rise early?" I said.

"In Germany we are all early risers," he replied, as he shook my hand warmly. "And you—you were up two hours ago. I saw you leave the house! You see, I do not sleep well—I get up and read in my room. Sometimes I read all night."

"A bad habit, which I put down more to indigestion than love of study. I am fond of reading, but sitting up all night is carrying matters much too far, in my thinking."

"Ah, you love reading! Let us walk in the grounds, and I will tell you some of our best authors. America is a great country, and has had some great men. But Germany! There you have the literature of thought in every branch: Goethe, Schilling, Lessing, Richter. Ah, they are the wonders of the world."

"Of course I cannot argue with you on those points," I said, as we halted beneath a tree; "but there is one poet of your country I used, when a youth, to be very fond of. Let me see—what was his name? Heinrich—Heinrich! Bother! I cannot remember the other name. I am bad at names. And yet this name will haunt me all day. Oh, Heinrich, Heinrich, why do you haunt me thus?"

I pretended to pick a flower, but I kept my eye upon my man. He started, and his cheeks grew pale, while his handsome mouth quivered with emotion.

"I suppose you mean Heinrich Heine?" he said nervously, and keeping his eyes fixed keenly upon me.

"Ay, that's the man. By the way, I understood Miss Lottie to say your name was Heinrich?"

He started a little, but answered politely, and quickly, that it was so; and then asked me to step up into his room, where he would show me some books which he had brought from Berlin. It was the very thing I wanted, and of course I at once accepted the invitation. His room was beautifully furnished, and he seemed quite at home.

From a *portmanteau* he drew forth several handsomely-bound volumes—German ones. They were written in German, but he read many passages of them, translating all into English with an ease which quite puzzled me. He was a man evidently of the highest attainments, and certainly a most interesting companion.

"What do you think of those verses?" he asked, as he closed the book.

"Perfectly beautiful," I replied. "The book seems full of gems. If you have many such in your *portmanteau* it must be a perfect casket of diamonds."

As I said these words I glanced up sharply. I saw a nervous twitching of the lip, which is so often seen in thieves, but his eye was firm, and met my gaze quite steadily, save that once he glanced nervously at the *portmanteau*.

"By the way, Mr. Tiverton, I don't know if Miss Ladywell has told you of the loss she has sustained?"

"Loss! No, I have not heard of any. I hope it is not serious."

"I don't know the value, but it must be pretty heavy. You knew the late alderman?"

"Intimately."

"You knew his weakness—a hobby, I should say?"

"Certainly—diamonds. And a fine collection he had of them."

"So I have heard. I never saw them. Well, they are lost."

"Lost! How can that be?" I exclaimed.

"How should I know? I had heard from Miss Ladywell of their rare beauty, and asked one day to be permitted to see them. She readily complied with my request, for, between us, I think the elder one is very proud of the gems. Well, she went to fetch them. We heard a scream, and on hurrying to Miss Ladywell, discovered her in a dead faint on the floor of her dressing-room. Her right hand clutched the casket. It was empty. The diamonds had been removed."

"That is strange; very strange! They must have been stolen. Has she any suspicion of any one?"

"Not that I know of. We went to the police and gave notice. They sent a thick-headed fellow down here, who searched all the servants' boxes. I offered him mine to search; the ladies objected. I insisted, and he did search, but could not find anything."

"Strange!" I said.

"Strange! What is strange? Surely you did not think he would find the diamonds in my box?"

"My dear sir," replied I reproachfully, "how could you think that I should have such a thought! I mean that it is strange the police have no clue."

"Oh, your Yankee detectives are no good at all. Fools, all of them! If I were a thief, I would always outwit them. But come, let us go downstairs. Most likely the ladies are down by this time."

He threw the books back carelessly into the *portmanteau*, and as he did so I took a peep over his shoulder.

The *portmanteau* contained nothing but clothes, books and linen. The only curious thing in the box, which I had never seen a gentleman carry before with him, was a large round of dry toast.

The German locked his *portmanteau*, and we joined the ladies. After breakfast, I managed to slip away from the rest of the company, and hurried through the grounds to a back-gate, where I had ordered my spotter. He was there, and we spoke in whispers through the gate.

"Have you been in the house looking for clues? Have you searched Von de Hardt's *portmanteau*?" I demanded.

"Yes, sir; I was in the German's room."

"What was in it?"

"Clothes and books; and there was a round of toast. He told the cook he always had that to eat of a night."

"Keep about here and have a couple of plainclothesmen close by. I may need you."

I was making my way back to the house when I heard voices in an arbor. I listened. It was the German and Miss Lottie.

"You love me. Have you not told me so?" whispered the man. "Then to-morrow we will slip out and get quietly and secretly married."

"But why secretly? I am my own mistress. Surely there need be no secrecy!"

"I have two reasons."

"Tell me them."

"In the first place, I am mixed up in a political intrigue, and until I have cleared myself I do not wish my presence in New York to be known. The other—— Well, I do not like to tell you; it looks so like vanity."

"Tell me, Heinrich."

"Well, your sister is in love with me. She has as good as proposed to me already."

"And you——"

"Oh, for your sake, I have borne it patiently. We must dissemble before her. She comes down the path. Do not let her see us together. We must not make her jealous. Go, darling, go! To-morrow you will be mine."

I heard something very like a kiss, and then Lottie hurried away, while the man, who remained where we was, was soon joined by Miss Almeria.

"Heinrich," she said, somewhat sternly, "you have been flirting with my sister?"

"Impossible!" cried the foreigner, who, to my surprise, uttered the strongest protestations of love, and told the same story to the elder as he had to the younger sister—only in this case the marriage-day was to be fixed the day after to-morrow.

Could the man mean to marry both of the sisters? I suspected now that he was the thief. Of course, if he married one of the sisters he would be pretty safe from prosecution. I hurried away to the gate, gave the signal to my man, and ordered him to watch closely, and should he see anything suspicious, to enter the grounds.

The day passed pleasantly enough, only the sisters were unusually cold to one another. Toward evening letters arrived. The German had several—one from Berlin, which evidently did not please him. I had the daintiest little note that a lady ever penned—pink envelope, scented and all, but the contents were not of the same character. It was from the office, and ran as follows:

"Keep a sharp lookout on the German. Strange news from Germany. More expected."

Von de Hardt's uneasiness wore off, and he sang, played and laughed the gayest of the gay.

We retired early, and I, waiting until all the house was still, crept out of my room and listened. The German was still up, and his chamber-lamp burned brightly. I peered through the keyhole, and discovered that he was carefully doing the round of toast up in a brown paper parcel.

I crept back to my room, prepared my revolver, put out my light, and opening the door and the window, sat at the latter, where I could watch the man's window. I watched some time without success, but at last it came.

The light was lowered and raised several times, and then a man crossed the lawn and took up his position beneath the window, which was softly raised.

A FACE AT THE WINDOW

By WARDEN O'FARRELL

IT was a cold, bright night in the early part of February, and the Limited Mail was speeding its way north. The passengers had settled down to a long ride, and had made themselves as comfortable as circumstances permitted. Those within range of the lamp-light pulled out their evening papers and began the perusal of the *rechauffe* of the morning's news which they had already devoured.

"Not much in the papers to-night," remarked Mr. Barker to the company generally.

He was a stout, little gentleman, evidently communicative.

"What have you got?" asked his friend Smithson, who was sitting opposite.

"The *Globe*."

"So have I."

A stranger here joined in the conversation. He was tall and spare; he looked like the typical Yankee.

"Have you the last edition?" he asked. "If so, you'll find as pretty a little story on the third page as you'll meet with in a month's reading."

"The escape of that convict?" inquired Mr. Barker.

"Yes; he's a plucky fellow."

"He's a consummate scoundrel," remarked Mr. Smithson; "a well-known burglar, and more than suspected to have been a murderer."

"Yes; I'm afraid he's a bad lot," said the American; "I wish he weren't. If he gets away he saves himself ten years' penal servitude; 'twas worth the risk."

"How did he manage it?" asked Mr. Barker. "I haven't read it."

"Broke out of the prison-van," replied Mr. Smithson. "Watched his opportunity and stunned the policeman inside, got the keys, let himself out, and bolted. It shows what a desperate man can do."

"Will they catch him?"

"That remains to be seen. The police are on his track," replied the American. "I should like to be there when they try to capture him."

Nothing could have been further from his thoughts than the possibility of his having to take part in the capture himself. The three men settled down to their papers again in silence.

"What's that?" suddenly exclaimed Mr. Barker.

"What is it?" inquired the others.

"I'm certain I saw a face outside the window," he replied.

"The reflection of one of us," suggested his friend.

"Perhaps 'twas the guard going by," said the American.

"If so, the guard isn't wearing a cap," said Mr. Barker moving toward the window.

"Got it blown off, perhaps," said Mr. Smithson. "Pray don't open the window; we'll all be frozen to death."

But Mr. Barker let down the strap, and peered out into the darkness.

The engine was throwing up a shower of sparks, and the blaze from the fire illuminated the tender. Those windows which had no blinds drawn threw a dim light on the hedges, but otherwise there was darkness.

"Anything there?" queried Mr. Smithson.

"I fancy I saw something."

"Well, do settle about it one way or the other, and shut the window."

Mr. Baker withdrew.

"I'm certain I saw a man's head," he asseverated. "And I'm nearly sure I caught sight of something moving when I looked out."

"Hadn't you better call the guard, and stop the train?" asked Mr. Smithson, ironically.

Mr. Barker did not reply, but looked uneasily into the darkness.

He had not been mistaken. A man, hatless and coatless, had passed along the foot-board of the carriage. He had given a quick glance into the compartment, and seeing it occupied by four men, had hastily passed onward.

The next compartment but one was labeled "Ladies," and was tenanted by one lady only. The convict, for it was he, stopped in front of this. With a dexterous movement he opened the door, and before the lady knew what had happened she saw a desperate-looking ruffian standing beside her.

"Don't be frightened, miss," he said, "I ain't going to harm you; I've no time; I want some money. It's life or death to me, and I must have it. Your purse, quick!"

She glanced at the little handle which was the means of communication with the guard. The convict was standing between her and it. There was nothing to be done. She drew her purse from her hand-bag and gave it to him.

He put it in his pocket, and in a moment was outside the door again.

Instantly she flew to the handle, and pulled it with all her might again and again. Then the fright she had undergone overcame her, and she sank onto the seat unable even to go to the window and give the alarm.

The convict had acted with the sagacity and daring which had made so many of his enterprises successful. He had calculated that his victim would give the alarm directly he left her. This was what he wanted.

It would have been madness for him to go on to the next town. He knew that men were on the watch at every station for him. He had mounted the train at the risk of his life as it passed slowly through one of the tunnels in the north of London, before it was free from the network of intersecting lines. He must somehow escape before it reached a stopping-place.

But to leap from the Limited Mail meant probable death, certain disablement. If, however, the train could be stopped he might slip down unseen between the carriages and make his escape with a fair chance of success.

It is not usual, however, to stop a train on a signal by the communication. The bell aroused the attention of the guard, but all he did was to lean out of his window to see if there was any sign that it was necessary to do any more.

There was nothing to show that the ringing implied more than a practical joke, such as is sometimes indulged in by those who have subsequent cause to regret it. He

was on the point of drawing in his head when he saw a white shawl being waved from a window. The lady had recovered sufficiently to drag herself to the side of the carriage, and open the sash.

This was enough. The guard put on his brake and signaled to the engineer to slacken. In half a minute the pace was palpably slower.

"What's up now?" exclaimed Mr. Barker, springing to his feet. The others followed him to the window.

They had not hitherto noticed the fourth occupant of the compartment. He was a well-built, tall man, but apparently very uncommunicative. He pushed his way to the window and looked out.

He uttered an exclamation, and to the surprise of his companions, flung open the door and began making his way along the foot-board.

The others followed his course in wonder. What did it all mean?

He had seen the shawl hanging from the window. He knew to whom it belonged.

He was traveling north with his sister, and rather selfishly, though with her full consent, had put her into a ladies' compartment whilst he enjoyed a cigar in a smoking-carriage. He had intended rejoining her at the first stopping-place. No wonder he was anxious when he found the train stopping, and saw his sister's shawl.

The pace grew slower and slower. The convict bided his time. What was the good of hurrying? No one would care to follow him in the dark.

He had calculated without a knowledge of all the circumstances. Half a dozen words told Mr. Fairbairn, the fourth occupant of the smoking-compartment, what had happened to his sister. He looked around as she spoke, and distinctly saw a man drop onto the rails from a carriage near the end of the train, and make for the country.

Without a moment's hesitation he leaped to the ground and followed him. The Yankee was at the open door, a not uninterested spectator. Mr. Barker had seen the convict's escape, and gave the alarm. In another moment all three were after him.

Mr. Barker and his friend soon gave up the pursuit. They were elderly and quiet business-men, by no means fitted for a midnight steeplechase across country. But the American was stronger and accustomed to wild life; the excitement of the chase seized him, and he was soon close on the heels of Mr. Fairbairn.

Nothing could have surprised the convict more than the fact that he was pursued. He soon saw, however, that he was. He still had about him the weapon with which he had stunned the policeman; he determined to put it to further use as he saw Fairbairn gaining on him.

The country was too open for concealment, and the gray dawn was beginning to brighten the horizon. The convict grasped his weapon and prepared to receive his pursuer.

What would have been the result it is useless to guess. At any rate, Fairbairn would not have stopped. But the American caught him up and put his hand on his arm.

"Don't you go for him," he said; "'tisn't worth while your getting damaged. I think I can persuade him?"

Fairbairn tried to shake his adviser off, but in vain. The convict was about to make a fresh bolt for liberty, seeing two against him; but the American's voice called him to stop.

"If you don't, I'll fire!" he cried, and the click of his revolver showed that his threat was not a meaningless one. The convict had no choice but to obey.

"Throw down that thing," ordered the American. He was obeyed; the short iron-bar was dropped.

"Now march back to the train. No games, remember, or 'twill be the worse for you."

A few minutes later the convict was in a luggage-van, securely barred in. At the next station he was handed over to the authorities for reconveyance to London.

Needless to say, the American was welcomed effusively by his former companions, who congratulated him on his success.

"Well, perhaps it was not I so much as this little toy," he said complacently. "It's a bad habit I got into years ago when I used to live among a wild lot out West."

"Is it indeed?" asked Mr. Barker nervously, eyeing the weapon uncomfortably.

The American smiled, and there was a merry twinkle in his eye that suggested more than his words.

"Well, now that you come to mention it, sir, really I don't believe it is!"

DEEP HOLES IN THE HUDSON RIVER

THERE are a number of deep places in the Hudson, as every one is aware, but few know that spots ranging from a depth of twenty to twenty-four fathoms are frequently met with south of the Highlands. The deepest spot in the river is just north of West Point, where a 50-foot fathom line failed to touch bottom. It is in the narrowest part of the river, where during the Revolution a chain was placed as an obstruction to British men-of-war. Not long ago it was suggested by Gen. John M. Wilson, chief of engineers, that the enormous quantity of stone taken from Dykman's Cut could be dumped into one of the big holes. A few years ago, when one of the Hudson River steamers was wrecked south of Cornwall, and afterward drifted to the north dock, which is a little east of the bottomless hole, a diver was sent down to examine the boat. He almost lost his life. The boat rested on what appeared to be a ledge, and began to sink rapidly. The men on the surface felt the tugging at the ropes, and knowing that something was wrong, pulled him up. When he told them of the bottomless pit the men all laughed, but the diver refused to go down again. From Haverstraw to Ossining the depth of the river is not more than seven fathoms, but off Fort Montgomery, where another chain was stretched during the Revolution, it is thirteen fathoms. There is a hole off Fort Washington which shows a depth of twenty-four fathoms. At the base of Cro' Nest is a stretch of water thirty fathoms deep. There many soldiers have been drowned while bathing. Just south of this is a spot, the bottom of which no man knoweth. For years it has been called the "World's End." How it got the name is a mystery. At Blue Point, a few miles above Newburg, there is another deep spot, where scores of skaters have lost their lives. It is a curious fact that over these deep holes only the thinnest ice forms. There are many legends connected with these deep holes in the Hudson, and stories are frequently told by the old boatmen who ferry passengers across from West Point to Cold Spring.

STORIES OF GREAT DETECTIVES

BY A NEW YORK JOURNALIST

The writer has had occasion professionally to learn a great deal about the real detectives. He has talked with them, corresponded with them, heard the narrative of their lives and exploits, and enjoyed in reality all the interest and excitement connected with these men that is constantly presented in the fiction of the day.

For the benefit of the thousands of readers of "Mystery Magazine," we propose to relate some of our experiences, and give a rapid glance at the most noted men in the different cities of the United States. The number of professional detectives is now very large. They are employed in every branch of the United States Government; all the great cities have a trained force, and the private agencies are to be found in all the cities, with correspondents throughout the civilized world. Our "Stories of Great Detectives" give, perhaps, the first familiar relation ever attempted of the characteristics of the great detectives who have made the detection of crime a new science.

A. J. STILES

AMONG the great detectives of the country was A. J. Stiles, of St. Louis, Mo. He distinguished himself on the police force as an officer and detective, and finally established a private agency, which did a flourishing business.

Here is his own account of the first important case undertaken by him:

"My first important job," said he, "after I was promoted to a position on the detective staff, was an interesting one. I had not been long in that position, when my partner, Hughey O'Neill, pointed out Ben Rosenthal to me on the street.

"'There,' said he, 'goes the smartest "fence" in the West.'

"He had been known to the detectives as a 'fence,' or receiver of stolen goods for years, but no one had been able to obtain enough evidence against him to insure a conviction in the courts, though repeated skilful attempts had been made to do so.

"On one occasion $15,000 worth of diamonds was known to have gone into his house on Eighth street, near O'Fallon, by the front-door; no trace of which, however, could be found, although within thirty minutes the house was surrounded by detectives, and searched from top to bottom; not a nook or corner escaping investigation, in chimneys, flooring, cellars, beds, yards, out-houses, stables, or elsewhere.

"It was afterwards found that he secreted the property in adjoining houses. Thieves, when approached by detectives, used to say:

"'There ain't no use in talking about turning up that swag. You can't do anything with us. We can "fence" all we can get with old Rosenthal, and you fellows can't get it.'

"Old Ben himself, if accused after some big robbery of having the property in his possession, would say:

"'Vell, mine friend, it don'd do you any goot if I did.'

"After a good deal of effort I obtained the confidence of the old 'fence.' In the course of a few days the loss of a watch was reported at headquarters. The owner offered a reward of $80 for its recovery.

"I told Rosenthal the news. He proposed then to give me the watch, have me return it, and divide the reward between us. I consented, and we went to his house to get the watch. He brought it down to me from upstairs. I then left, with the agreement to meet him in an hour on the corner of Eleventh and Washington avenues and divide the money.

"On taking the watch to the owner, he identified it, and going to the corner of Eleventh and Washington avenues, I found Rosenthal waiting for me. I went up to him.

"'Well,' says I, 'let's go over to the Four Courts.'

"He looked up.

"'I don't understand you,' he said.

"'You are under arrest.'

"For the first time he comprehended the trap set for him, into which he had so readily fallen. He saw he had placed himself in my hands, and had voluntarily given me all the evidence to convict him of receiving stolen property, and the penitentiary was staring him in the face.

"He turned a ghastly white, and with tears in his eyes begged me, for the sake of his motherless children, to let him go. Of course I refused. And that ended that case."

Detective Stiles once made one of the longest trips on record. He said about this:

"I went to Oregon, and brought back John W. Pardour, a murderer, making the longest trip—7,000 miles—ever made by a member of the department,' on department business; and if I had failed to deliver my man to the sheriff, and get his receipt, on which to collect the expenses from the State, the Board of Police Commissioners would have been out $1,600—the cost of the trip."

He had a terrible time on this journey.

He went to the heart of the roughest region of the country.

Sometimes the staging was in snow three feet deep.

And then on his return he was obliged always to keep a vigilant watch upon the murderer chained to him.

Stiles was a very determined man, and he was often engaged in cases where the greatest amount of firmness was necessary to carry the case through. A legal contest once took place in St. Louis, over the Windsor Hotel property, which cost some $300,000. One party was in possession, with a guard, when Stiles captured the premises for the other party.

For several days and nights the little band who held the place had kept faithful watch, when they were taken by surprise, becoming captives to overpowering numbers of grim-visaged, hand-on-their-hip-pocket men, under the leadership of Captain Stiles.

Every entrance of the fortress, with the exception of the front-door, had been locked, bolted and barred for days, to guard against the expected raid. It was shortly after five o'clock in the morning. Mr. Plunket, after unlocking the front-door to admit the letter-carrier, made a round of the house, anticipating nothing at that early hour.

Returning within two minutes, he was confronted by Captain Stiles, with an order to leave the house within two minutes or be thrown out. Plunket refused to do so, at the same time warning the detective not to lay hands on him.

While this was going on, Stiles' men had tramped in

after their leader, and were scattered through the halls, posting themselves as sentinels at every commanding position. There were twenty-five or thirty of them. Some took seats in the office, and others patroled the outside.

The surprise was a complete one.

Mr. Livingston rushed excitedly upon the scene a few minutes later. He was also ordered to get out, but retorted in much stronger language. He denounced Stiles and his men as trespassers upon private property, and threatened them with the law's vengeance. By a note thrown from a window, Livingston at length got word to his lawyer. Soon a sheriff's *posse* filed in, when Stiles' men took charge of the only open door, and refused admission to all but a chosen few. Warrants were sworn out against Captain Stiles and a Mr. Thatcher, and they were arrested, but immediately released on bond.

In a letter before us, Detectives Stiles wrote: "At this writing we have entire and complete possession of the property, and expect to hold it."

A St. Louis paper related the following: "One of the happiest men to get out of the muddle was Captain McCord, of the steamer *Commonwealth*. After getting his baggage loaded into an express-wagon he looked around for his wife, but she was not to be seen.

"'Here's your baggage, all right,' said a friend of the captain.

"'Oh, I don't care anything about that now,' said he; 'it's my wife I'm looking for. Where's my wife? Have you seen her?'

"No one had seen her, and the captain was fearful that she had been locked in some of the besieged rooms.

"Getting back under the roof once more, after a deal of trouble, he found her, and coming out again on the sidewalk, expressed himself as delighted to be counted out of the list of guests at the troubled Windsor."

Detective Stiles was born in the State of New York, and was then thirty-five years of age.

He was a fine-looking and very gentlemanly man. He stood erect, with a height a little short of six feet, and weighed slightly over two hundred pounds. He had a dark complexion, and eyes that were searching. His motto was, in his own words: "I can neither be bought nor intimidated."

The next article relates to the celebrated officer, The next article relates to the celebrated officer George H. Bangs. You will enjoy it.

CARDS AND THEIR FASCINATION

THE fascination of poker and other card games is an interesting psychological study. In this country it is well known that participants in a poker game have sat down to play for twenty-four hours at a stretch without eating or sleeping. The question of the winnings, no doubt, played a great part in such long sessions. Bret Harte, Mark Twain and other American writers have told curious stories about the fascination of poker.

But this mania for cards has not always been caused by a desire to win money. In the back-rooms of saloons and cigar-stores, on the east side of this city, pinochle games are played often until dawn when there is no money at stake whatever. History tells of some very curious incidents which have centered around the card-table. When Louis XV of France was at the card-table, the fascination of the game rendered him absolutely oblivious to all his surroundings, and even to decency and humanity. On one occasion, when one of his opponents, overcome by excitement, collapsed in his chair in a fit of apoplexy, His Majesty affected to ignore the incident until some one exclaimed: "M. De Chauvelin is ill." "Ill?" retorted the king, casting a careless glance at the stricken man, "He is dead. Take him away; spades are trumps, gentlemen."

Equally weird is a story Goldsmith relates. When the clergyman arrived to prepare a lady parishioner, who had a passion for gambling, for her approaching death she, after listening a short time to his exhortation, exclaimed, "That's enough; now let us have a game of cards!" The preacher consented to play in order to humor her. The dying woman won all his money, and had just suggested playing for her funeral expenses when she fell dead.

In the early years of the last century, a whist club, composed largely of clergymen, used to meet in the back-room of a barber's shop in a Somersetshire town. On one occasion, so the story runs, when four of the club members were acting as pallbearers at the funeral of a reverend brother, some delay occurred, and the coffin was set down in the chancel. One of them produced a pack of cards, and suggested a rubber. The coffin served the purpose of a table, and the players were deeply immersed in the game when the sexton arrived to announce that everything was at last ready.

The curious fascination cards possess for their devotees is illustrated by the following story of Lord Granville, at the time England's Ambassador to France: One afternoon, when he was about to return to Paris, he repaired to Graham's to have a farewell game of whist, ordering his carriage to be at the door at four. When it arrived he was much too deep in the game to be disturbed. At ten o'clock he sent out word that he was not ready, and that the horses had better be changed. Six hours later the same message was sent out, and twice more the waiting horses were changed before he consented to leave the table, after losing £10,000.

An equally remarkable story is told of George Payne, the great turf plunger of eighty years ago. On one occasion he sat down at Limmer's Hotel to play cards with Lord Albert Denison, later the first Lord Dondesbrough. Hour after hour passed, the game proceeded all through the night and long after day dawned, and it was not until an urgent message came to tell Lord Albert that his bride was waiting for him at the altar of St. George's, Hanover Square, that the cards were at last flung down. It was Lord Albert's wedding day, and he met his bride £30,000 poorer than when he left her the previous day.

One of the most romantic of gambling stories is told by Mr. Thiselton-Dyer of a plainly-dressed stranger who once took his seat at a faro-table, and after an extraordinary run of luck, succeeded in breaking the bank. "Heavens!" exclaimed an old, infirm Austrian officer, who had sat next to the stranger, "the twentieth part of your gains would make me the happiest man in the world!"

"You shall have it then," answered the stranger, as he left the room. A servant speedily returned, and presented the officer with the twentieth part of the bank, adding, "My master, sir, requires no answer." The successful stranger was soon discovered to be no other than the King of Prussia in disguise.

SOME SCRAPS OF PAPER

A Detective Serial

BY POLICE CAPTAIN HOWARD

CHAPTER THREE

FOLLOWED BY A DWARF.

The fellow now stepped to the window, and, looking out, whistled three times to some person who was standing on the opposite side of the street. Cole then returned to the desk, and, pulling out his watch, said:

"Now, then, unless you give me a favorable answer in three minutes I will have you taken into custody."

The detective heard steps coming up the stairway, and he dashed behind a screen which was standing in the hall near the door, where he could hear all that was going on without being seen. As Foss crouched down behind the screen he heard Mr. Frazer shout:

"I will never give you my consent to marry Nellie!"

The man who had been signaled for now came along the hall and stood listening outside of the office door. The detective eyed him from head to foot, and recognized the newcomer as a confidence-man.

"It is as I thought—a conspiracy. I will watch them and see what they will do," he reflected.

Just then Cole exclaimed in an angry tone of voice inside the office:

"Your three minutes are up!"

"I have given you my answer," sternly replied the lawyer. "Call in the officer if you like."

Cole stepped to the door, unlocked it and admitted his confederate, who closed it as soon as he entered. The detective was standing on the door-mat a minute after the door was closed, and was peering through the keyhole into the room.

The confidence-man stepped up to the lawyer, and, laying a hand on his shoulder, said in as pompous a tone as he could command:

"Mr. Frazer, I arrest you for the abduction of a young woman by the name of Ella Rose, and for having incarcerated her in a convent against her will."

"Show me your authority," quietly demanded the lawyer.

The fellow threw back his coat and displayed a badge, which was the facsimile of those worn by the detective force.

"That badge indicates nothing," said Mr. Frazer, who now was fully alive to the danger which threatened him. "Show me a warrant for my arrest."

"Here it is," the fellow said, as he drew a document out of his pocket and handed it to the lawyer.

Mr. Frazer took the paper and opened it. He found that it had all the appearances of a legal warrant, and as soon as he had finished reading it he said:

"I will go with you quietly. First let me write a letter to a lawyer friend of mine and send it by a messenger."

"No, you'll have to come with us right away. I have a taxi at the door."

"I must write the note; it won't take a minute."

"We haven't got a minute to spare. Unless you come immediately I shall be compelled to put the nippers on you and take you by force."

The lawyer was quiet for a moment, and then was about to reply to the bogus detective, when the door was thrown open and Foss walked into the office.

"Andy Suggs, you had better stop this little farce," he remarked.

The confidence man and his companion turned around, and when he recognized Foss a muttered curse came to his lips.

"Foss, you shall pay for this!"

The detective stepped aside and pointed to the door. Both men slunk out, looking as if they would have killed the detective if they had had the chance.

Foss closed the door.

"Mr. Frazer, those fellows are dangerous," he said. "The fellow Cole I never met, but Suggs I know as one of the most notorious confidence-men and gambling-house keepers in the city."

"Mr. Foss," said the lawyer as he took a seat at the desk, "I don't know how I shall ever be able to pay you for your kind services to-day. You have saved my child from danger, for when anything threatens me, it threatens Nellie as well."

"Tell me, how long have you been acquainted with Peter Cole?"

"About six months. Nellie and I met him at Los Angeles, and when we came back he called on us, then his visits at the house became quite frequent. Nellie fairly hated him, and rejected his suit several times. He proposed that I should compel my darling to marry him, and I refused, expressing my contempt for him in very strong terms. This riled him so, that yesterday he went away threatening to compel me to come to his terms. What followed this morning you know already."

"Did you ever know any one by the name of Rose?" the detective asked, after the lawyer had finished speaking.

"As God is my judge, I never knew any person by the name of Ella Rose."

"Then the story that Peter Cole hatched up is simply a piece of fiction?"

"It may be, but then this may have some connection with what I wanted to see you about."

"Let me hear what it is, and I will be able to give you my opinion."

"The story may sound like a romance, but I assure you that every word of it is the truth," said Mr. Frazer in a tone of voice that was both impressive and convincing.

"I believe you. Go on."

"About eighteen months ago I went to the bank one day, and was told that I had overdrawn my special deposit account. This amounted to about five thousand

dollars, and I had not touched it from the time I had placed it in the bank a week before. I told the cashier that there must be some mistake, but he showed me a check for six thousand dollars, which had my name attached to it, and which had been cashed the day before."

"Did the cashier tell you what kind of a looking person presented the check?"

"Yes; he gave me a description. I looked at the check and found that there was no difference between the writing on it and my own. That it was a forgery it was evident, for I never signed it."

"Did you tell the bank so?"

"I did, but they got other checks of mine, and an expert examined them and pronounced the forged one genuine. I was compelled to stand the loss. I employed several detectives to try and work the case up, but every one of them failed to find the person who robbed me."

"Had you any suspicions as to who could have done it?"

"None whatever. About a month afterward I received a notification from the Bank of California, stating that they held a note of mine which would be due in a few days. This astonished me, for I had never borrowed money or given a note to any one. I went direct to the bank and found the note was for sixty days, and represented that I had bought a piece of property at the Mission for one thousand dollars, and had given my note for it to a person by the name of John Doe."

"Did you pay this note?"

"No; I told the bank that it was forgery and that I would not pay it. They said that they had discounted it for John Doe, who had been introduced by a broker. They did not remember who the broker was. They thought that I was not telling the truth, and so they told me that unless it was paid they would commence suit for the amount."

"I told them that they could sue. They brought suit for the amount and lost, as there was no such person as John Doe owning property at the Mission. Well, after this there were more forgeries for small things. Orders were sent to my tailor for clothes, my hatter for hats, and to some of my clients for various sums of money. I spent considerable to find out who was doing this; but if I had thrown the money in the gutter it would have done just as much good."

"When was the last of these forgeries committed?"

"About a month ago."

"How was that?"

"An order was sent to a lady client of mine by a messenger-boy. The order was for one hundred dollars, and the lady paid it. No traces of the messenger could be found."

"What is the name of this client?"

"Mrs. Libbie Howland."

"Does she live on McAllister street?" queried the detective.

"Yes. But why do you speak so excitedly?"

"Mrs. Howland and her child were murdered early this morning."

This announcement caused the lawyer to jump from his chair and stand looking at the detective in astonishment.

"Have you any clue?" Mr. Frazer finally asked, as soon as he could recover from the suddenness of the announcement.

"Not as yet, although I hope to be able to run the murderers to earth."

"Were there more than one?"

"I think there must have been two."

"Do you suspect any one?"

"No. But, Mr. Frazer, I would like you to answer me some questions, and to give me all the information that you possess about Mrs. Howland's life."

"I shall tell you everything that I know, and if I can help you in running the murderers to earth, I shall be only too glad to be of service. I always liked Mrs. Howland."

The detective now lapsed into silence for a few moments, and then he asked:

"How much was Mrs. Howland worth?"

"About a million and a half."

"Who had charge of her property?"

"I had. She had very little real estate, most of her money being in mining stocks and government bonds."

"Did she ever make out a will?"

"About three months ago."

"Whom was this in favor of?"

"Her child."

"Do you know if she had any relatives?"

"She always told me that she had no one in the world but the child."

"How long have you known her?"

"Five years. Ever since she came from Australia."

"Did she ever tell you anything about her life?"

"Once I asked, but she bade me never to mention it to her again or she would take her business out of my hands. She never made a confidant of me. All that any one was ever able to glean was, that she was a widow and that she had come from Australia, where her husband had died of consumption."

"In what form was her wealth in when she came here?"

"In Bank of England notes. These I had cashed for her."

"How did you become acquainted with her?"

"She was sent here by a friend of mine, who traveled with her on the same steamer from Australia."

"Is this all you know about her?"

"Yes."

"I don't think any one knows that you had charge of her affairs. If they do, watch them closely. We will see that she and the child are properly buried. Have you the widow's securities about your office?"

"Yes, they are in the safe."

"Remove them immediately, and all the other valuables you may have in the safe, for they may not be safe here."

"What would you advise?"

"I would put them in a safe deposit vault."

The lawyer immediately set to work to pack up the securities contained in the safe, and in a little while, by the detective helping him, he soon had them all placed in a large tin box.

They then carried this across the street to the safe deposit building, where they had it securely locked in a safe.

As they left Mr. Frazier's office and entered the vaults a dwarf followed them.

CHAPTER FOUR

A MYSTERIOUS WARNING

HUGH FOSS left Mr. Frazer, and after promising to see him against the next day, he went to his rooms on Sulter street to think over what he should do in relation to the cases he had taken hold of.

As he thought, the remembrance of the scraps of paper

came into his mind, and taking them from his pocket, he placed them on the table before him.

As Foss examined the scraps, he found that they had writing upon them, and commenced to put them together. For over an hour the detective worked assiduously at trying to match the scraps, and was finally rewarded for his trouble by being able to read a note.

Foss pasted the scraps, as he matched them, to a sheet of white paper, and to his surprise, he found that the handwriting in the note was the same as that which was on the envelope which he had taken from the desk, addressed to Charles Rose, of Lowell, with the exception that it was in lead-pencil, and that the author had written it hurriedly, as if trying to disguise his chirography.

The note ran as follows:

"LIBBIE: You must give me an answer to-night before ten o'clock, or you will have cause to regret it."

The note was not signed, but it had probably been written the night before the murder, and the widow, no doubt, had paid no attention to it, but tore it up, and threw the scraps into the cuspidor.

Who was the person who had threatened the widow, and what was the answer which she was to give? The letter was a threat, and the author had addressed the widow by her Christian name. He must have been intimate with Mrs. Howland, or he never would have addressed her thus.

Foss now picked up the sealed envelope, and after examining it some time, he concluded to open it and see what it contained. He held the sealed part over steam for some minutes, until the gum which stuck it was soft, and then with considerable care, he opened it and took out the note, which was written on paper with Mrs. Howland's monogram at the top.

The handwriting was the widow's, and was entirely dissimilar to that on the envelope. The detective studied the characteristics of the writing for some time, and then read these words:

"DEAR SIR: I inclose something which you may care to see. Every detail of the past of the woman whom you have thought dead for years, must of necessity be of interest to you. She escaped your persecutions, and has lived in happiness in various parts of the globe. Now that you are married again, and this woman still lives, and you have not procured a divorce, you are a bigamist, and if your true wife were to come to you and accuse you of your crime you would be severely punished. I have waited long and patiently for revenge, Charles Rose, and the time has now come when you are in my power. LIBBIE.

"Duplicate."

Fully aroused from his apathy, and intensely interested, the detective read the note again, and then exclaimed:

"I see; this note is simply a copy of a letter which was sent some weeks ago. This envelope, no doubt, was an old one, and the widow placed the duplicate in it for preservation."

The writing on the scraps of paper, and that on the envelope puzzled the detective greatly. At last his face lit up, and he exclaimed:

"I have it! The note must have been written by Mrs. Howland's husband, and so was the address on the envelope. That envelope must have been in the widow's possession for a number of years, for now that I examined it more closely, I find that it is slightly yellow with age."

Foss made up his mind to keep this discovery to himself, and folding up the note, and the note patched up out of the scraps of paper, he locked them up together in a drawer of his safe.

The detective had now a clue to work with, and the first thing he determined to do was to find out where Charles Rose resided. He had made up his mind to one thing, and that was that Mrs. Howland's husband had had a hand in her murder, if he did not commit the deed himself. His threat seemed to prove it.

Besides trying to find out where Charles Rose was, Foss concluded to get possession of the account which had been inclosed in the original note to Rose. The detective was anxious to find out all about Mrs. Howland's career, for in spite of all that he could think of in the widow's favor, he was certain that her life was not what it seemed, and that she was not above reproach.

The detective had a friend in Lowell who had a large detective agency, and as it was early in the afternoon, he went to the telegraph office and sent the following dispatch:

"LOWELL DETECTIVE AGENCY: Do you know a man by the name of Charles Rose? If so, telegraph particulars about him immediately. HUGH FOSS."

The detective returned to his room and waited for an answer. In an hour's time he received the following message:

"HUGH FOSS: Charles Rose resided here, and was known to the police for the last ten years as a desperate character. Served two terms in State prison. Left this city some weeks ago for parts unknown. L."

When the detective had finished reading this, he said:

"That fellow Rose probably is in this city. I am confident of it, and I will find out who he is. I wonder if Mrs. Howland had a photograph of him? I will go out to the house on McAllister street, and make another search."

Without any further delay, the detective jumped on a car, and rode out to the widow's house. When Foss left his home he was followed by the same dwarf who had watched him and the lawyer when they left the valuables at the safe deposit vaults.

The dwarf was about three feet high. His hair was dark, his eyes were small and piercing, and his hands were like long claws, which he worked nervously by opening and closing his fingers.

As the dwarf followed the detective, he grinned and muttered:

"How I hate all the sleuth-hounds. My master told me to watch him closely, and report what he does; and I'll do it, too."

All the way up through the valley the dwarf kept chuckling to himself, so that the passengers and the conductor looked upon him as an idiot.

The dwarf noticed that his actions were becoming a cynosure for all eyes, and he put a stop to them, and relapsed into silence, at the same time watching the detective so closely that Foss did not make a movement but what it was noted by the strange being.

(To be continued.)

CURRENT NEWS

FARM-HORSE ON BATTLEFIELD

Roy Dooley, a young farmer living near Hunnewell, near Paris, Mo., sold off his farm-horses and enlisted in the United States Army nearly two years ago. According to word received here, while serving in France, Dooley saw a horse down the road. He stopped the soldier, and was told it was an American horse, bought for the French cavalry. Dooley said the horse recognized him as its former owner at once.

AN AMERICAN PRINCESS

Alice Heine, the only American woman to become the wife of a sovereign, was born in New Orleans sixty-one years ago. Her father, a Jewish banker of New Orleans, who made a fortune, settled in Paris after the Franco-Prussian War. His daughter, Alice, became the bride of the Duc de Richelieu, scion of an ancient French family. She bore him a son and daughter, after which he died. The duchess remained a widow many years before she married the Prince of Monaco, whose prior marriage to Lady Mary Douglas Hamilton had been annulled by the church. Alice Heine's second matrimonial venture did not turn out happily, and the prince was later granted a divorce.

CONVENIENT COOKING IN THE FURNACE

In many houses the furnace furnishes surplus heat which can be utilized for cooking by a method such as this: By bending some old iron wire to the shape of a rack, or shelf, onto the furnace-door, on which a piece of sheet-iron is placed to hold a large kettle. The device is especially useful for baking beans, as they require long hours of steady and intense cooking, which makes it quite expensive to bake them in a gas-oven. Potatoes placed on the platform also bake very nicely. This method of cooking should not be attempted when there is a hot fire in the furnace, being suitable only when the fire is quite low and covered with plenty of fresh coal.

SLEEPING-SICKNESS FOLLOWS INFLUENZA

One death has resulted in Punxsutawney, Pa., from "sleeping-sickness" after influenza, and another victim of the strange malady is recovering, as the result of an operation performed by physicians.

Mary Junko, eleven years old, died from the disease the other day, after sleeping for ten days. Everything known to medical science was utilized in an effort to arouse the child. She was a victim of influenza a few months ago.

Mrs. John Wilde, fifty-six, was near death when she was awakened. She was stricken with influenza and was ill for some time. Later she became drowsy and fell asleep. Efforts to arouse her were unavailing, and it was decided to operate upon her. The operation was performed recently, and a quart of blood was drawn from one of her veins. Soon afterward, when shaken violently by the physicians, she opened her eyes. She is now believed to be recovering.

ELEPHANTS WITHOUT TUSKS

It is a singular thing that Ceylon is the only part of the world where the male elephants have no tusks. They have miserable little grubbers projecting two or three inches from the upper jaw and inclining downward. Nothing produces either ivory or horn in fine specimens throughout Ceylon. Although some of the buffaloes have tolerably fine heads, they will not bear a comparison with those of other countries. The horns of the native cattle are not above four inches in length. The elk and the spotted deer's antlers are small compared with deer of their size in India. This is the more singular, as it is evident from the geological formation, that at some remote period Ceylon was not an island, but formed a portion of the mainland. It is thought that there must be elements wanting in the Ceylon pasturage for the formation of ivory.

FAMOUS PROPHETESS PREDICTED WORLD-WAR

The most famous prophetess of the nineteenth century was Mme. Thebes, who was made famous by Alexander Dumas, the younger. When she was beginning her career in Paris, M. Dumas invited her to exhibit her prophetic powers before a company of friends, and she read their palms so successfully that Dumas was aroused to enthusiasm, and wrote an account of the seance for a Paris publication. From that moment Mme. Thebes' success was assured. For years she read the hands of kings, statesmen, diplomats, actresses and other people in all walks of life. Perhaps her most famous prophecy was made early in 1914, when she issued a warning that France would be embroiled in a great war. This was months before there was any sign of conflict. She gained an international reputation when she predicted the death of King Humbert of Italy, several months before that monarch was assassinated.

LIZARDS WITH WINGS

At least one lizard enjoys, to a certain degree, the power of sailing through the air, as in the cases of flying-squirrels, flying-frogs of Borneo and some other animals. These lizards are called flying-dragons, and they are all small-sized forms found in the Indo-Malayan region.

They possess elongated ribs in mid-series, some five to seven pairs of them; these ribs support, on either side of the body, a semi-transparent membrane, it being stretched over them both dorsally and ventrally, united at the free margins and continuous with the general integument of the body.

It, or rather, these "wings," close up like a fan when not in use, and fall to the sides of the animal, but when spread form a parachute of marked effectiveness, as by its use this lizard can leap from the limb of a tree and sail to another one at certain distances as well as a phalanger or a flying-lemur.

Sometimes these "wings" in certain species of the flying-dragons are beautifully marked, resembling the wing-markings of some butterflies.

HAS NO HANDS

Thomas K. Cushman, of Rock Rapids, Ia., is Lyon County's oldest rural mail-carrier—oldest, that is, in years of service only, for in spirit there is no younger man anywhere. No matter what may be the weather or the condition of the roads, patrons are assured of getting their mail.

All this is true, in spite of the fact that Cushman is physically handicapped to an extent that would discourage most persons. As a boy of fourteen he got caught in the historic blizzard of January 12, 1888, and was so badly frozen that he had to submit to the amputation of both hands.

But the loss of a hand or two meant little or nothing to him. In addition to being a mail-carrier, he is a farmer on a small scale.

Tommy gets up early every morning to carry a long mail-route, and he works until late every night, supplying customers on an evening milk-route. In spite of his lack of hands he can do practically everything that the average able-bodied man can do.

TIES IN RAILROAD-TRACK

How many ties in a railroad-track? Did you ever ask yourself that question while riding on a train? North Carolina forests are to be tapped for a new supply, says Crete Hutchinson, who writes in the *American Forestry Magazine*, of Washington, as follows:

"At the present time the Railroad Administration is facing a shortage in tie production. West of the Mississippi fifty million cross-ties are required annually for replacement; east of the Mississippi eighty million, with approximately twenty million additional ties for street railways and other industrial needs. A grand total of 150 million cross-ties, or four billion five hundred million board feet of timber.

"Again a shortage of 65 per cent six months ago, the present shortage is only 40 per cent, and probably will be reduced to 30 per cent by the end of the year, due to better understanding of specifications. Thirty-four per cent of the timber used by the Railroad Purchasing Committee is white oak. Large areas of the forested section of North Carolina in Transylvania, Jackson, Graham and Clay Counties contain this timber, and a road forty miles long is being put in to get this timber out."

THE EX-CZAR IS NEEDED IN A SUIT

The suit of the Marine Transport Service Corporation to collect a judgment for $117,450 out of a fund of $1,000,000 on deposit at the National City Bank to the credit of Nicholas Romanoff, former Czar of Russia, was adjourned pending a decision by Supreme Court Justice Benedict, of Brooklyn, upon the question of whether it is necessary to serve the former czar, if alive, or, otherwise, his legal representative, with papers in the action.

The judgment was recovered on a shipping contract. An attachment was filed against the $1,000,000 funds, which never was paid over to the sheriff to satisfy the judgment, as other claims are pending against it.

When the case was called yesterday, Bernard Naumburg of No. 15 Broad street, Manhattan, attorney for the Marine Transport Service Corporation, said the National City Bank, one of the defendants, has raised the question whether the action can be maintained without the service of papers upon the ex-czar, or upon his legal representative. Mr. Naumburg asked Justice Benedict to decide this.

NEW THINGS

A hollow perforated corrugated drum with a suitable cover that can be fastened to any tub or boiler to convert it into a washing-machine has been invented.

A third hand has been provided by a European inventor for a watch to enable it to be used as a compass by the method of pointing the hour-hand at the sun.

Patents have been granted for a process for utilizing anthracite coal screenings for fuel by mixing them with water-gas-tar without compression into briquets.

There are but ten cities in the world of more than 1,000,000 population, and Russia is the only country, except the United States, which has more than one of them.

For newspaper bulletins or advertising purposes an electric sign has been invented on which letters appear in lights as keys on a typewriter keyboard are pressed.

Bolivian natives living on the eastern slopes of the Andes scatter the juice of a certain tree on streams to render fish insensible so they can be caught by hand.

A new plane is provided with a shield for the hand to prevent it being bruised.

With lead deposits numerous in Gautemala, the metal is mined only by the Indian.

FALSE TEETH AS A CAUSE OF CANCER

The plates used for supporting false teeth, when imperfectly fitted, are proving such a prolific source of cancer that a note of warning is sounded by Dr. C. Everett Field, director of the Radium Institute, in the *Journal* of the American Medical Association. "There have come under my observation as director of the Radium Institute of New York City many instances in which faulty artificial dentures have caused the development of malignant growths along the line of maxillary processes.

"The mouth, with its tender membranes, is peculiarly subject to injuries which are difficult to heal. If there be a predisposition toward cancer, it is likely that it will crop out in any region where the soil has been suitably prepared to foster the growth of malignant cells.

"Where a set of teeth fits imperfectly, the constant abrasion on the gums causes, at first, the development of an area of congested tissue. In time this formation degenerates into an ulcerated state, which, although innocent enough in the beginning, may soon exhibit a rapid malignant transformation. The changes from a healthy structure of the gums to that of cancer moves on so insidiously in the early stages that frequently the condition, when recognized, is difficult to combat.

"Radium offers to the truly hopeless and inoperable cancer case the one relief possible, and seemingly it gives such aid in every instance. Commonly we see much of the pain lessened, the discharges improved, the odor checked to a degree, and the patient comforted. While improved technique may be increasing somewhat our success, we feel that far better results can be secured by urging the necessity of a more prompt recognition of the early signs of malignancy.

"Let it be emphasized, as strongly as possible, that any chronic irritation serves as a predisposing factor at least in causing cancer. Let it also be emphasized that cancer is at first a local disease, which for a time is held within its own confines. As such it is curable by prompt removal. Let it still further be emphasized that the sole reason why cancer is at present so seldom cured is because it is rarely recognized in its primary state and promptly accorded treatment."

CURIOUS NEW ZEALAND SOURCE OF OIL

Kauri gum has been exported from New Zealand to the value of $100,0000,000, which does not seem to represent one-half of the actual value of the gum deposited in the earth from the immense kauri forests that have covered much of the northern half of the North Island for many centuries.

The heavy kauri forests in these parts of New Zealand have been shedding this gum in abundance for centuries from the leaves, limbs and the body of the tree, and much of it is buried as low as eight to ten feet below the surface, and during the ages large quantities of the gum have been chipped off and decayed to some extent and formed immense peat deposits wherever sufficient water was found, that are now rich in kauri oils and lighter spirits. According to late developments, this is destined to become an important industry in this part of the Dominion, for it is claimed that the oil can be profitably used in the manufacture of varnish, paints, etc.

STRANGE PREHISTORIC MONSTER

There has recently been presented to the American Museum of Natural History by Dr. A. R. Ledoux, of New York, a fossil-bone of unusual interest, the calcanoum, or heel-bone of the giant ground-sloth megatherium.

Dr. Ledoux states in a letter accompanying the fossil that while bathing at Long Branch forty years ago he stepped on some hard substances, which, on examination, proved to be fossil-bones. One of these was the skull of a walrus, the second a fragment of mastodon, and the third was the bone of the ground-sloth.

This heel-bone is of enormous size, measuring over fifteen inches in length and weighing, in its semi-petrified condition, twenty pounds. The animal to which it belonged probably died within a few miles, at most, of the place where the bone was found.

The ground-sloths flourished during the Pleistocene or Glacial Period. They were of gigantic size, larger than any existing quadrupeds except the elephant. Their hind-legs were very massive, as was the tail, which apparently helped to support the animal when it reached up after the leaves of trees, upon which it fed. They were thought to have been confined to southern parts, but this bone seems to mark the northern limit of the giant sloth's range.

It is interesting to note that the megatherium was the first fossil skeleton ever mounted. Nearly two centuries ago a Spanish colonist in the Viceroyalty of Buenos Ayres —now the Argentine Republic—discovered the skeleton of a huge animal. The skeleton was sent to Madrid and later mounted. It was the great Cuvier who recognized the relationship of this animal with the small present-day tree-sloths.

LIFE SUMMED UP IN PROVERBS

Proverbs embrace the wide sphere of human existence. How many there are in existence no man could say. To Solomon alone are attributed no fewer than 1,000 proverbs, and though it is noted that Americans have few of their own, our weather proverbs alone, collected by the United States government some years ago, made a book of no fewer than 148 pages.

That "there is no proverb which is not true" is itself a proverb on proverbs, but when proverbs contradict, can both be accurate? Even Solomon offered the choice of direct opposites: "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit."

"Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him."

One cynic, regarding proverbs, has even gone so far as to declare that: "There are forty proverbs about the bear, and the forty are mere rubbish concerning him."

It is singular, at first sight, how largely animals are referred to in proverbs, but since proverbs are built on men's lives and their observations, it is really not so odd.

The docile sheep reminds one of obedient children or tractable servants; the strutting peacocks, with their large and beautiful tails, of gaudily-dressed women; the rock-climbing goats, of bold adventurers; the cunning foxes, of unprincipled and shrewd tradesmen; the chirping crickets, of care-free merrymakers, and the slippery eel, of unreliable employers.

This readiness to see resemblances everywhere shows itself in proverbial similes and comparisons—the man with a sluggish mind is "as stupid as an auk"; a cheerful companion is "as happy as a clam"; the headstrong youth "as wild as a buck"; the diligent workman is "as busy as a bee"; the courageous soldier is "as brave as a lion"; the neighbor who is lean and tall of stature is "as gaunt as a greyhound."

BUGS IN U. S. DESTROY $1,000,000,000 IN CROPS

Save the crops! The first estimate of crop loss due to insects ever made public by the Bureau of Biological Survey of the United States Department of Agriculture has been announced. It is the stupendous amount of $1.104,-869.300! More than half the First Liberty Loan, one-quarter of the Second, enough to pay almost 4 per cent interest on $28,000,000,000 of Liberty Loans.

Put it another way, if you don't like figures. The crops eaten on American farms by insects each year would feed starving Belgium. They would pay for the year's education of more than our 20,000,000 school children, 21 per cent of whom are said to be suffering from malnutrition.

Eula McClary, author of an article in *Good Housekeeping*, writes:

"We can reduce this waste to its least possible figure by merely ceasing to obtrude our short-sighted human ways into nature's nicely balanced plan—by merely allowing the birds to eat more bugs. According to the Bureau of Biological Survey, the total saving of crops by birds each year amounts to $444,000,000.

The San Francisco earthquake and fire destroyed property to the value of $400,000,000. Foods worth almost three times as much are destroyed by insects each year, and we think nothing about it. On the contrary, we deliberately deprive ourselves of the assistance of the agency nature provided for holding the insects in check by shooting our birds for the table or for a holiday. Meantime most insects reproduce themselves some billions of times each season, the potato-bug alone showing no tendencies toward race suicide, with its fifty or sixty million descendants in a single summer. With the shadow of world-faming rousing out of the East, it is no light matter for the birds, the defenders of our fields, to have to fight for their lives while they are about our business. Their services should be recognized, and they be given complete protection under a stern law. Senator McLean, of Connecticut has fathered such a law in Congress. It has been passed by the Senate in the shape of an act to give Uncle Sam the power to compel the various States to observe the only bird-treaty in the world, a treaty between the United States and Canada—which Canada is observing and we are not.

"CANNED BLOOD" USED IN WAR

Use of "canned blood," one of the remarkable developments of war surgery, was described by the surgeon general's office for the benefit of the families of hundreds of soldiers whose lives were saved by blood transfusion.

One of the heaviest causes of death among wounded soldiers is hemorrhage. Immediately after the United States entered the war the medical department began organizing to reduce the number of fatalities from this cause, and large numbers of medical men were put in training under the direction of Col. Walter B. Cannon, of Harvard University. It was early decided that methods to be used should be as simple as possible because of limited facilities for work at the front.

Development of the use of "canned blood" was a direct result of war conditions. During a heavy attack it was impossible to arrange for transfusions direct from persons. So the fluid was drawn previously, stored on ice in sterile flasks, then used in emergency cases. Where the wounded men could stand it, a blood substitute was injected which sustained life until he could be removed to a hospital, where more direct transfusion could be employed.

"By these methods many men were returned to their families, who in previous wars would have lived but a few hours," the department's statement asserted.

ENORMOUS BASKING SHARK WEIGHS TONS

The taking of Monterey Bay, California, by the Santa Cruz fishermen of a huge basking shark weighing almost two tons, a fish 18 1-2 feet long, calls attention to how big these species grow. According to Dr. David Starr Jordan, the basking shark reaches a length of 36 feet.

Doctor Jordan writes: "It is a dull and sluggish animal of the northern seas, almost as inert as a sawlog, often floating slowly southward in pairs in the spring and caught occasionally by whalers for its liver.

"When caught its huge flabby head spreads out wide on the ground, its weight in connection with the great size of the mouth cavity rendering it shapeless.

"Although so clumsy and without spirit, it is said that a blow with its tail will crush an ordinary whaleboat.

"The basking shark is known on all northern coasts, but has most frequently been taken in the North Sea and about Monterey Bay in California. From this locality specimens have been sent to the chief museums of Europe.

"In its external characters the basking shark has much in common with the man-eater. Its body is, however, relatively clumsy forward; its fins are lower, and its gill openings are much broader, almost meeting under the throat.

"The great difference lies in the teeth, which in Cetorhinus are very small and weak, about 200 in each row. The basking shark, also called elephant shark and bone shark, does not pursue its prey, but feeds on small creatures to be taken without effort.

"Fossil teeth of Cetorhinus have been found from the Cretaceous, as also fossil gill rakers, structures which in this shark are so long as to suggest whalebone."

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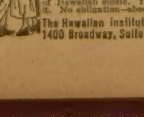

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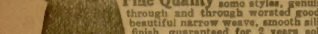

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To the Wife of One Who Drinks

I have an important confidential message for you. It will come in a plain envelope. How to conquer the liquor habit in 3 days and make home happy. Wonderful, safe, lasting, reliable, inexpensive method, guaranteed. Write to Edw. J. Woods, WB-101, Station F, New York. Show this to others.

To Men who are Bald or are Losing Their Hair

Let me tell you of my own case.

I was almost completely bald, and as I had tried many tonics, lotions, etc., without benefit, I expected to remain bald for the rest of my life.

But instead of baldness, I now have a complete growth of hair upon my head. This is all the more remarkable because I am 66 years old.

The way that I obtained a perfect hair growth was as simple as it was astonishing to me.

While traveling I met an old Cherokee Indian who gave me a pomade or ointment to use upon my scalp. Although my confidence was meager, I used this compound. He told me it contained selected components from the Three Kingdoms of Nature.

After several applications my looking-glass revealed a slight fuzz. This developed from day to day to a healthy growth of hair. Imagine my satisfaction in being able actually to brush the hair where there had been a bare scalp! Yet it was true. Soon I was able to comb it—and I have been able to do so ever since.

I traded with the old Indian savant, obtaining the recipe. It was crude and the ointment was almost nauseating. So I had it modernized, by a practical chemist, holding to the original principle, and now from the recipe a cosmetic pomade is prepared. Men and women have used it—and many are now doing so. In numerous cases remarkable results are being reported.

This ointment contains no alcohol nor anything else that has a tendency to dry the hair, the scalp or the roots.

The way for you to prove what it will do for you is to try it. I will mail you the recipe free of charge. Your own physician will tell you that it is safe and you may obtain a supply from the druggist. Or you may get it from me. It is called Kotalko. A proof box will be mailed, with the recipe, if you send 10 cents, silver or stamps, to John Hart Brittain, 150 East Thirty-second St., BB-101, New York, N. Y. This is a genuine announcement devoid of the lavish phraseology of the usual advertisements, but it means exactly what it says, and I, being a business man of good reputation, stand ready to prove it to you.

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Get a small box of Oil o-Korein (in capsules) at any drug store. Follow simple directions and reduce at least one pound, average, weekly under $100 guarantee. Absolutely wholesome; endorsed by physicians. The fat seems to melt away. By proper reduction you will make wonderful gain in physical and mental energy. Add years to your life. Remember Oil of Korein. Non-purgative; no thyroid. At the druggists'; or write for FREE BOOK to Korein Company, NG-101, Station F, New York City. Best instituted in the world to become slender quickly, safely, inexpensively—and why this. Every over-stout man or woman should lose weight and improve personality.

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